

DOCTORAL THESIS

The representation of women in Nollywood films an investigation of its impact on audiences in Malawi

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**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NOLLYWOOD
FILMS: AN INVESTIGATION OF ITS IMPACT ON
AUDIENCES IN MALAWI**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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ABSTRACT

Since its emergence two decades ago, the Nollywood film industry is fast becoming social, cultural and economic phenomenon among Malawian audiences. Every year, Nollywood actors visit Malawi and some Malawi print media have columns dedicated to Nollywood. According to unofficial statistics carried out by this study, nine out of every ten film enthusiasts in Malawi's rural areas are Nollywood fanatics, and at least seven out of ten people in the urban areas frequently watch Nollywood films. The films are more popular than both Hollywood and Bollywood films. It could be argued that this popularity is due to the reason that the films are cheaper to buy. Another reason is that the proliferation of free-to-air satellite dishes has made these films easily accessible for the Malawian audience. Notwithstanding these perspectives, this study reveals that unprecedented appeal to Nigerian made films is first and foremost a result of cultural identity. The study, carried out among nine communities across Malawi represented by focus groups, demonstrates that viewers enjoy watching the cultural portrayals manifested in the films by the characters which, they feel, are similar to their own real life and experiences.

Taking into account the widespread patronage of Nollywood films, it is safe to assume that these films are making an impact on the local audiences. Based on focus group discussions and analysis of the six case study films by 83 participants in selected areas across Malawi between 2012 and 2013, the study findings indicate that there is a problem of power relations in Malawian society based on gender and

sex. Men have the upperhand in decision making, access to resources and education opportunities. The study reveals that emergence of the films in Malawi is offering another perspective of gender and social relations: the films' portrayal of women shows that it is possible for them to have equal opportunities and power relations as their male counterparts.

As the case study films were representative of Nollywood films owing to the fact that they represented women/gender and gender relations similarly, this study therefore suggests that the films have a potential to bring about social change in Malawian communities. Through the responses of participating audiences that encompassed both men and women, the study reveals that the cinematic portrayals, especially those of female characters, have the potential to change the social perception of women and womanhood.

The study uses continentalisation (as adapted in Omoniyi, 2014b) as a conceptual framework in interpreting and analysing audiences' responses to female representations in Nollywood films. The study observes that both Nigerian (as depicted by the film characters) and Malawian audiences share common cultural aspects that are predominantly African. The study regards Nollywood as a vehicle of intra-continental cultural flow. For this reason, the study makes an attempt to explore the extent to which Nollywood could be effective in facilitating gender notions that are identical across African societies.

The study claims that despite variations in certain elements, culturally, there are more commonalities than differences among Africans. Malawian audiences and in

particular, female audiences could get an inspiration from the portrayals that would advance their cause in society. Arguably, the portrayals of militancy and some heroism in some female characters could go a long way to inspire the female audiences and instill confidence in them. Thus, exposure to the films for a long period could improve Malawians' perception of women or womanhood. This thesis therefore argues that Nollywood is a vehicle for the flow of these engendered notions of power relations across the continent. Thus, these engendered notions should be identified as African approaches to gender, and with their emphasis on balanced power relations between male and female members of communities, they have the ability to/ they have a potential to deconstruct social gendered female stereotypes. This study therefore claims that Nollywood films in general offer positive, empowering representation of African women.

Nollywood studies are a rather young research field, and the representation of women in those films has been poorly-studied area so far, with gender relations being largely ignored by scholars. The fact that this is the first study done on the reception of Nollywood in Malawi makes it arguably a unique and valuable contribution to knowledge.

Keywords: Nollywood, female representation, continentalisation, Pan-Africanism, audiences, gender relations

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DEDICATION

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PART I

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study was conducted against a background of the general public's perceived gender imbalances between men and women in terms of their social relations across Malawian society. Malawi, just like other nations in sub-Saharan Africa, has a higher population of women than men (NSO, Malawi, 2008). However, women are disadvantaged, both economically and in terms of social welfare. There are apparently huge gaps between men and women with regard to social and economic opportunities. Men apparently enjoy easy access to education, political participation and business enterprises whilst women are side-lined and often confined to domestic activities such as childcare and household chores.

Despite their large numbers, women constitute a very small percentage of the work force. In business, it is men who enjoy the upper hand in running small, medium and large businesses. In respect of education, boys are given the first consideration and in some communities, educating a girl is considered a luxury. In terms of socialisation,

boys are socially enabled to feel superior to girls that lead to girls developing a sense of low self-esteem. This experience continues throughout their adult life.

Malawi has two cultural communities with conflicting marriage and inheritance customary practices. Matrilineality is a culture in which a husband leaves his parents and lives with his wife's family. No bride price is paid for this union. By implication, ownership of property and anything that the couple may have acquired belongs to the woman. Consequently, it is expected that she has a say in the organisation and management of the family's affairs. Where there is divorce, separation, voluntary annulment of the marriage or death, the wife or her family takes custody of the children and property. In contrast, a patrilineal practice, the wife leaves her family home and goes to live with her husband's people and the man pays a bride price to the woman's family. In this case, any property that the couple acquires automatically goes to the man. The wife has no say in the family. Where there is divorce, separation, voluntary marriage annulment or death, the husband or his family takes custody of the children and the property.

The above description suggests that women in matrilineal communities do enjoy equal relations or are much better off than men. It could be argued that women are better off in matrilineal communities than their patrilineal counterparts. However, empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Arguably, women both in matrilineal and patrilineal communities are underprivileged. They are both marginalised by existing cultural customs and practices that favour men. In the matrilineal communities,

although theoretically women appear to be in control, in practice it is the men who are in control (Kathewera, 2011).

For example, at a family level, it is the husband who takes a salaried job or who takes charge of any commercial activity and decides how the proceeds should be spent in the family. Even though women have rights to land ownership under matrilineal cultural communities, it is their husbands who decide how the land must be used and how the income is spent in the family. In general, men make most of the crucial decisions in a family in matrilineal communities despite the fact that the custom bestows that right on the woman. Secondly, at a clan level, it is actually the clan leader, either an uncle or brother of the woman, who takes charge of matters of the clan. His jurisdiction includes taking decisions on matters of landownership and usage (see White, 2010; Kathewere; Chimbuto, 2011).

Consequently, both of the above scenarios leave women, even in matrilineal communities, no better off than their counterparts in patrilineal communities. Effectively, this leads to a situation of power imbalances in the family and at all other levels of society. The socialisation process as expounded earlier in this section promotes boys at the expense of girls. In this study, by focusing on a targeted audience of Nollywood, I explore the extent to which the films have a potential to prompt social change in general. In particular, the study investigates the extent to which Nollywood films have the potential to change the public's perception, mindset and attitude towards female members of society.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were designed on the main theme of *the representation of women in Nollywood films*. Based on the case study of six films my focus groups were requested to watch, the research questions acted as a guide to help the respondents discuss their interpretation of the portrayal of women in the films and the impact, if any, that these portrayals have on their social and personal life in general. In particular, respondents were asked to consider the impact the portrayals have had on their social relations in respect of gender and power relations between men and women. In broader sense, participants were asking key research questions that included: -

- Why the films have by far become very popular among Malawian audience surpassing other films such as Bollywood and Hollywood?
- What Nollywood film genre (s) are most popular among Malawian local audiences?
- How are women represented generally in the majority of these Nollywood films' genres ?
- Assuming Nollywood films are popular as discussed earlier, what could be the impact such popularity bring on audiences perceptions and attitudes on African women in terms of gender relations between men and women?

- How could such impact forecast a possibility for social change in Malawi and across Africa in the face of patriarchal beliefs and practices that marginalise women in societies?
- Could such a change, if any, suggest a potential for a new approach to the understanding and definition of African gender that is distinct from Western concept of gender?

The films used in the study were: *Not With My Daughter* (2002) directed by A. Mwakalor, *The Pastor's Wife* (2009) directed C. Ejoro, *The Comforter* (2009) directed by A. Okereke, *Royal Fight* (2011) directed by I. Ogbonna, *Mr & Mrs* (2011) directed by I. Onyeka and *The Last Vote* (2002) directed by A. Amenechi. These films were selected based on the general consensus of the respondents during the pilot study in 2012. During the pilot study, respondents were introduced to several Nollywood film titles. Significantly they were given the opportunity to select their own favourite films across all genres. Domestic issues appear to hold relevance to the majority of the audiences as discussed in chapter five of the thesis. Films that portray aspects of common themes that characterise their everyday cultural and social approaches to life were found to be appealing. Themes relating to religion, royalty, extended family, love, corruption in politics and apparent celebration of traditional African customs over modernity were popular. This therefore left the six films introduced above as the overall respondents' choice.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

The primary aim of the study was to establish the way women are represented in Nollywood films and the impact that this has on local audiences in Malawi in terms of gender, sex and social relations between males and females in Malawian communities in particular and African societies in general. By analysing responses from target audiences across Malawian society, the study has established the possibility that these films can deconstruct certain negative perceptions of women before the general public and at the same time reconstruct positive perceptions and attitudes towards them.

Specific Objectives

- To establish the extent to which Nollywood is more popular than Bollywood and Hollywood.
- To establish the reasons why Malawian audiences are attracted to Nollywood films.
- To investigate whether the emergence of Nigerian films offers an opportunity for the public to deconstruct the perceived gender imbalances that are manifested in various forms and at different levels across Malawian society or not.
- To investigate the extent to which Nollywood films have the potential to facilitate cultural flow from one nation to another.
- To enquire if Nollywood films can facilitate the continentalisation of gender concepts across African societies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There have been concerns over insufficient research on what is emerging as Africa's largest film industry (Haynes, 2010), this study is a response to such calls (Haynes, 2010). To date, some limited work on Nollywood audiences has been undertaken. Esan (2008) carried out an audience study based on a sample of UK Nollywood viewers. Her study reveals that audiences found that the film stories provide a link to their cultural heritage. She states that her findings suggest respondents believe Nollywood films provide a platform for them to socialise. McCall (2002) engaged an Igbo native doctor in a village in southeast Nigeria where he and his family discussed and interpreted the film *Blood Money* (1996). The encounter enabled him to relate the cultural and social narrative of the film to the localised or contextualised capitalism in the plot. McCall's analysis suggests that the film presents blood as a symbol of capitalism in an African sense whilst money is a symbol of capitalism in a Western sense. Akpabio (2007) suggests that African audiences, especially those from Nigeria where he conducted his study, enjoy the films as they reflect their own society. He argues that this is despite the presence of themes such as sex, violence, prostitution, sibling rivalry, and the evils of polygamy and devilish spiritualism.

Basing her investigations on the impact of language competence among non-English speakers watching English Nollywood films, Ugochukwu (2009) establishes in her study that viewers, who were predominantly French-speaking Congolese, were able to follow the films possibly owing to their African cultural heritage. Marston et al. (2007) theorised Nollywood films in terms of globalisation and conclude that the films present a new case of defining globalisation as a flattening phenomenon.

Finally, Omoniyi (2014) presents and explores the emergence of Nollywood films as an alternative to globalisation in an African context. He states that the films are a bottom-up approach to globalisation on the continent. He makes a case for Nollywood to be conceptualised as a vehicle for intra-cultural flow, arguing that the films facilitate the continental movement of cultures, products and ideas. Therefore, in this way, continentalisation is an alternative to globalisation in the African context (ibid).

However, the above research, among others, does little to consider the films' potential to bring about social change among its audiences. There is no available scholarship that demonstrates audiences' reaction to the films' portrayal in relation to gender relations in African societies. Therefore, a case study of Malawian audiences and their response to female representation in the films as explored in this thesis brings in a fresh angle to the study of Nollywood. The study demonstrates that the films have the potential to influence audiences' perception and behaviour towards women.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study has great relevance to me personally, to the Malawian community where it was carried out and above all to the Nollywood scholarship. In the first place, the study is relevant to me as I was born and grew up in a community where gender imbalance between men and women is perceived, conceived, accommodated and regarded as a norm. As stated earlier in the thesis, women have always been perceived to be disadvantaged in all spheres of life. Men have always been perceived

by the society as privileged from childhood to adulthood, and hence the study creates a forum for audiences to interrogate the way women are represented in the films. Hence, the emergence of Nollywood films offers an opportunity for the possibility of a change of mind-set among male and female audiences to begin to perceive women with parity to the way they perceive men. Hence, this study claims that Nollywood films in general offer positive, empowering representations of women.

Secondly, it should be acknowledged that Nollywood films have been watched in the country for twenty years now. The films are popular and watched by many Malawians as my pilot (2012) and main field study (2013) revealed. However, despite the presence of Film Studies in the country's colleges and university faculties, there is no programme at present that includes Nollywood films in its curriculum let alone as a research area. Further to this, there is no available literature that examines Nollywood and its Malawian audiences. Moreover, there is no research that relates Nollywood to social change in Malawi and African societies as a whole. However, with the patronage the films command and the contribution the industry is making to the social and economic life of the people in the continent, Nollywood is worthy of study. Nollywood is the second highest revenue earner in Nigeria after oil and gas (Omoniyi, 2014:19). As discussed in chapter two of the thesis, Nollywood produces huge volumes of films every year. For instance, in 2007 alone, 1 588 of them were approved by the Nigeian Film and Video Censorship Board. The industry has since donned a transnational toga and has developed into an African and African diaspora industry with considerable patronage in Kenya,

Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi among others (Okhai, 2009:3 in Omoniyi, 2014b: 18).

Lastly, at a continental level, for a long time politicians have called for Africanism or Pan-Africanism but it has remained a philosophy that has not been very successful. The coming of Nollywood films offers an opportunity to revisit the ideals of Pan-Africanism. In this regard, as suggested by Omoniyi (2014:19), Nollywood films facilitate cultural flows within the continent which promote the idea of Pan-Africanism. With respect to the central theme of gender relations, as far as the findings of this study suggest, the films facilitate the redefinition of gender relations in the context of African cultural concepts (Oyewumi, 2004; Amadiume, 2004). In other words, the films open a way for a negotiated concept of African gender (Nnameka, 2004).

FILMS AND POTENTIAL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

There is scholarly evidence pointing to the impact of film or television on audiences. Werner (2006) carried out an audience study on how Senegalese women and children consume Latin-American *telenovelas*. These telenovelas are mostly watched by women and children who meet together at regular intervals. His findings revealed that women were able to intertwine some of the threads picked up in the *telenovelas* within their own daily social fabric to instigate change, especially in the realm of gender relationships and parent-child relationships. Further to the above observation, Werner asserts that the *telenovelas* appeared to play a critical role as catalysts in

enabling women to gain autonomy in micro-economic activities. Thus, he concludes that women are attracted to *telenovelas* because they help them to adopt changes.

Likewise, Toure (2007) carried out a reception study on the effect of *telenovelas* on audiences in two separate communities: - Bouake in Ivory Coast and Bamako in Mali. His findings indicate that women's craving *telenovelas* demonstrates the films trigger identification dynamics in them. He observes that women started imitating the actors in their dress and hair-styles, hence, the films acted as a source of fashion inspiration. Further to this, Toure reveals that as a result of their exposure to *telenovelas*, audiences would learn how to handle relationships at various levels: parent-child, spouses, and demonstrations of affection. Thus, *telenovelas* acted as a gateway to the outside world where new cultures exert an impact on local audiences.

Given the evidence of the impact of films on audiences as demonstrated above in Werner (2006) and Toure (2007), this suggests the possibility for Nollywood films to exert influence on its audiences. The scholarly evidence of audiences' experience with *telenovelas* in Senegal, Mali and Ivory Coast suggests that Nollywood has the potential to impact on the social and gender relations of its Malawian audiences. Chapters five to eight of this thesis contain a detailed discussion of this claim.

CONTESTED CONCEPT OF AFRICAN GENDER

There are contested perspectives in gender and feminist research with regard to female representation in Africa. Some scholars argue that female representation among African societies must be studied on its own terms, and that African knowledge must be a factor in conceiving any theory to interrogate the mode of

representation (Amadiume, 1987; 2005). Thus, they argue that only African scholars are well placed to study and interpret African cultures including African gender/feminist in its absolute sense. However, others dismiss such thinking arguing that with changes that come as a result of cultural exposure due to technology, it is inevitable that African cultures could remain pure without external influences (Bakare-Yusuf, 2004). They dismiss any assertion that limit the study and interrogation of African cultures to African scholars, arguing, no single individual could claim absolute knowledge of African cultures. They therefore advocate for inclusive study of African cultures that take note of the influence of non-African cultures on the continent (Ibid).

Oyewumi (2005) argues that the narrative of gendered corporeality that dominates Western interpretations of the social world is a cultural discourse and cannot be assumed uncritically for others. She argues against Western-held notions that place gender as a universal and timeless social phenomenon that cannot be divorced from the ideology of biological determination of sex. She criticises Western definitions of gender which she describes as simplistic as they reduce male and female individual aspects to biological factors. She argues that for this reason Western theories cannot effectively interrogate female representation in African societies. Thus maleness and femaleness in African societies are not grounded in biological categorisations: “though gender is proclaimed to be socially constructed, the way it is used in dominant discourses implies that it is a biologically determined category” (Oyewumi, 2005, xiii). Oyewumi describes the categorisation of women in Western feminist discourse as a homogeneous, bio-anatomically determined group. She

argues that this approach renders women powerless and victims in the eyes of society. She further states that this does not reflect the fact that gender relations and social relations are historically grounded and culturally bound (ibid).

Kisiang'ani (2004) supports Oyewumi's argument. He asserts that the introduction of Western concepts regarding sex, sexuality and gender distort the long-held beliefs and practices of African gender which are not based on sex. He argues that in the colonial era, Africans were trained to perceive things only from a Western European standpoint, often universalised to embrace all humanity. Effectively, he continues, Western ideals informed all intellectual discourse about African people, while concurrently criminalising and atomising the culture and value of the African. Thus, Kisiang'ani argues that the above portrayal depicts the African woman as irrational, only guided by instincts. He says that she is presented as a sex object ready to satisfy the needs of a man; she lives for the needs of men; she is all body without mind or soul. He concludes that African women are presented as inferior, speechless beings, housekeepers, and breeders. He thus proposes an Afro-centric approach.

He suggests that any study relating to African culture has to be carried out by an insider. In this regard he proposes that only an African should study African society. He argues that an African scholar is likely to believe and share values of the local culture and has biases towards the needs of the local people (ibid). He makes references to the forces of globalisation through urbanisation, education and modernity as areas in need of consideration for a fair understanding and analysis of women's issues in present-day African societies. Whilst there is a greater possibility

for African researchers to understand and analyse the continent's culture than their Western counterparts, I do not agree to the assertion that to be an African does not necessarily guarantee a critical and objective study of the people's cultures. The fact that this study presents conflicting opinions on the best way to study African gender serves to demonstrate that to be African is not a given fact that one would come up with undisputable opinions of their findings.

Bakare-Yusuf (2004) argues that in the present-day Africa, due to the capitalist economy, a person is likely to surrender his senior status to a younger person on the grounds of their education and wealth. Hence, the discourse of power relations remains fluid in the prevailing environment unlike the historical traditional African societies. Here, Bakare-Yusuf suggests that power relations are based on the economic status of an individual and not necessarily seniority as argued by Oyewumi. Thus, he implies that any woman with a sound economic status is likely to be treated as a superior regardless of her gender, a view I consider as simplistic. There are African scholars who argue that African culture is not a standalone phenomenon but rather it is influenced or affected by other non-African cultures.

Among the critics of the Afro-centric school of thought is Bakare-Yusuf. He cautions against any attempt to play down the influence of Western gender/feminist theories in interpreting female representation in an African context vis-à-vis power relations. He further adds that asserting a polytheistic approach to understanding other African social dynamics does not necessarily imply an outright rejection of theories championed by other scholars, such as Oyewumi and Amadiume.

The above discussion regarding contestations in defining concepts of gender in African societies is reflected in the findings of this study. Chapter six of the thesis details an account of variances in audiences' interpretation of concepts of gender. The chapter reveals how audiences interpret aspects of gender in films subjectively. Thus, observations among the study's participants underline the extent to which defining the identity of an ideal African woman or African gender and power relations is contentious. The study reveals that cultural diversity within African societies, in this case, Malawian society, contributes to the variances that lead to subjectivity in audiences' understanding, interpretation and articulation of the portrayals of women and gender relations in Nollywood films.

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

I used qualitative approach to this study. The approach was into two parts. The first part I did text analysis of the films through regular reviews of female representation in selected 104 videos. The second part I carried out audience studies that involved focus groups who discussed the films' female representation. Prior to the main study (2013), I conducted a pilot study (2012) that was essential in the formation of focus groups. They were 12 focus groups during pilot study. The experience of pilot study informed the organisation of focus groups for the main study the following year. This came up with nine focus groups spread across Malawi's demographic, ethnic and cultural divide. The focus groups were formed using snowballing method whereby I used friendships or relations to purposeful organise Nollywood enthusiasts in their respective communities.

The focus groups were nine during the main study and encompassed both male and female participants. A total of 81 viewers participated in the focus group discussions. As audience research on Nollywood film is not common in the field and is new in Malawi, it makes this work relevant and offers original contribution to this young and new scholarship.

ORGANISATION OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As audiences are the most vital component of this study owing to the fact that the available literature suggests no evidence of similar work before on Malawian film audiences, proceedings of the focus group discussions will be provided in detail in chapters five to eight. Participants discussed each of the six films in detail, analysing all the major characters. Dominant themes in the films include culture, religion and gender relations. The overall presentation of these films is melodramatic and cross-references genres and sub-genres of love, royalty, kinship, family and romance. Below is the synopsis of each of the case study films.

The case study films were chosen by the participants of focus groups during the pilot study. The focus groups were 12 at pilot study and they were later reduced to nine in the main study. The nine focus groups that emerged during the main study were identical to nine groups from the 12 groups in the pilot. I presented to the participants assorted films to preview and debate on the one they felt could trigger balanced discussion on female representation. They came up with the final six films which were representative of Nollywood films. The six case study films represent women/gender and gender relations.

SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE STUDY FILMS

Not With My Daughter (2002)

This is a film that underlines the clash of cultures within African society. It also highlights the place of religion within African culture and thus, demonstrates how, to a large extent, religious practices and beliefs are a major part of African cultures. In this film, the marriage of the main characters, Ada and Hussein breaks down due to their cultural differences. Ada comes from the south of Nigeria, a predominantly Christian society. She is educated and she is a city dweller. Hussein Hassan comes from a strong, highly conservative Islamic society. Although educated, Hussein was born and bred in a rural area.

Against all odds, Ada left her home with Hussein despite warning against this move by her people. She also defied her uncle's instruction not to marry a 'northerner' due to the long-time ethnic rivalry between the southern Christians and the northern Moslems. When Hussein takes Ada to his people, the woman faces resistance and rejection. Ada is liberal, a factor that does not help matters and she makes little effort to adjust to her new environment. In response to his wife's situation, Hussein offers little solace to Ada. He is confused; at one point, he asks the wife to forgive him for the apparent ill-treatment she is getting from him and his people. Another time, he rebukes his wife for not accepting his values and his people.

Hussein's family deliberately ruin the couple's marriage by insisting he marries a second wife, Khadijat, who is a fellow Muslim. Hussein succumbs to their demand.

In reaction to their proposition, Ada refuses to voluntarily yield to Hussein and his people's wish to let him have a second wife. Hussein keeps on telling Ada that the girl in question is being offered to him as a 'gift' by the family friends. When Hussein's uncle intervenes and offers a clarification to Ada in stressing the fact that Islamic Laws allow a man to have more than one wife, Ada counter-argues. She replies that her husband promised he would not take a second wife in future, at the beginning of their marriage. This response stuns members of Hussein's extended family and when confronted with this claim, Hussein confesses to have made this promise. However, Hussein goes ahead and marries 14 year old Khadijat to become his second wife.

Ada challenges her in-laws and defends her interests whenever she feels attacked or undermined. For instance, when Hussein and his people want their daughter to be raised in a way they deem proper in Islamic tradition, Ada refuses. She insists the child be raised in a secular way: attending a secular education system instead of imposing Madrasa and Islamic teachings on her. In an act of defiance, she snatches the daughter away from her mother-in-law and bans the extended family members from contacting the child. In reaction to Ada's 'arrogance', Hussein divorces Ada by proclaiming 'I divorce you' four times as required in Islam. In reaction, Ada openly challenges Hussein's action arguing "I cannot be divorced based on Islamic laws because our marriage was constituted according to civil laws". Upon hearing the news that Hussein had earlier married Ada in a civil arrangement, everyone in Hussein's family, including Hussein's mother, is shocked as the marriage cannot be dissolved following Islamic laws. According to Islamic marriage laws, a man can

divorce a wife legally by simply proclaiming before her the words ‘I divorce you’ four times in a row. Thereafter, the decision is binding and the woman has to live with it. This is contrary to the requirement in civil and Christian marriages where both parties are expected to be heard before a decision is reached in a civil court.

Ada’s older sister visits the couple’s home where she confronts Hussein over ill-treating her sister. A fight breaks out, Ada and her sister are engaged in a fight with Hussein and the sister kills Hussein in the process. Ada is shocked and cries for her husband but the sister insists they run away in fear of repercussions. They take the child and sneak out of the compound leaving Hussein dead in the house.

Mr & Mrs (2011)

This film tells the story of Susan, a woman, who, despite everything she does for her husband, is never appreciated. She is loyal and loves her husband Ken and his family. Ken treats her as inferior and he is ashamed to be associated with his wife. Her mother-in-law also looks down on her and she openly encourages her son to divorce her for another woman. The husband cites the ‘irreconcilable’ class differences between him and his wife as the reason their marriage cannot work:

It’s unconceivable, how do I introduce her to others? I can’t take it: meeting people and introducing myself as Ken, the son of Mr...so....so...the deputy governor of this state...and this is my wife, Susan....and it stops there. At least people would expect her to be a daughter of some famous family in this state.

He divorces Susan but later regrets the decision. Susan undergoes transformation. She leads a free life as an independent woman. Ken becomes jealous and monitors her movements critically. Ironically, it is actually Ken who invests a great deal of

effort in getting Susan back into his life this time. He suspects Susan is having an affair and he is desperate to win her love back. Susan lays down her conditions for a reunion which Ken agrees to and eventually they reconcile.

At the beginning Susan is simplistic and acts as a committed house wife. Her husband takes her for granted and therefore does not value her. In the second part, after the divorce, Susan looks even more beautiful than before. She is apparently liberated and enters a relationship of equal partnership in marriage with her husband, now Ken can no longer underrate her. As they start a new stage in their marriage, Ken and his people will now be treating Susan as an equal partner.

Royal Fight (2011)

The film's storyline is about a young woman, who, in her childhood, would fight anyone who confronts her. In the film she fights with the king's son, Prince Ikenna, and having lost an eye in the fight, the king forces the prince to marry her arguing that no man would want her now she only has one eye. Prince Ikenna, heir to the throne, is apparently a short-tempered man. It is not surprising that the first years of their marriage are full of fights as both the wife and the husband believe in physical fights as a way of settling their differences.

Later on in the film, Ikenna's wife, Dubem, changes her lifestyle and becomes a likeable personality in the royal household. She starts listening to others, is now more patient and supports family members in several ways. In the process, she teaches her husband to exercise restraint in dealing with disputes arising in the family, no matter how severe the situation. This is evidenced when she asks him to

ignore rude remarks made to them by his brother's wife "you don't fight a woman, do you?" On one occasion, during a family meeting involving all members of the royal household, Ikenna openly rebukes his brother's wife and this incident puts Ikenna on a collision course with his brother. In reaction to this, Dubem asks her husband to make peace with his brother immediately: "apologise to your brother for insulting his wife, please," and Ikenna acts on his wife's advice. The prince is now a changed person and he turns into a mature and reasonable man by the time he assumes the leadership of the kingdom.

Dubem is portrayed as a considerate and selfless woman in the way she handles the pressure associated with the royal household. She endures public disapproval and the humiliation of being labelled a failure as a woman as a result of her inability to bear children. Her attitude in handling issues affecting her confidence is so inspiring to fellow women: in return for her sense of maturity and humility, the family treats her with great respect. She ends up assuming the mother figure in the royal household and everybody trusts her more than anyone else. She wins the vote of confidence of her in-laws and the people of the kingdom.

The Comforter (2009)

This film is about a young couple, Henry and Amarachi, who are in love and plan to marry. Henry introduces Amarachi to his family as his future wife. The news of their relationship is a cause for joy for Henry's parents. Amarachi apparently has no stable home as she lost both her parents at a tender age and she lives under the care of a Catholic priest who acts as her guardian.

The film begins showcasing Amarachi as a hard working young woman from an unknown background. She is hired by Henry's father, an entrepreneur to run his business. Her introduction to the business saves it from bankruptcy. She is praised by her boss, and his entire family. It is during this period that she gets to know Henry.

Apparently, Henry is a weak character who leads a reckless life and has no idea how to contribute to the running of the family business. However, when they start their relationship, Henry's life is transformed and he turns out to be an asset to the family business. Amarachi is solely responsible for Henry's change of lifestyle. Perhaps it is for this reason that Henry's parents encourage their son to consider a future with the girl.

However, the relationship suddenly goes sour when Henry's aunt comes to visit. She is furious upon seeing Amarachi in the house and learning that she is Henry's fiancée. Amarachi's past haunts her, with the aunt revealing Amarachi's dark side. Henry's aunt accuses her of killing her son whom she was in love with a long time ago. Amarachi is never given an opportunity to explain herself, is caught unawares and her world crumbles before her. She is forced out of the family.

Later in the story, Amarachi resurfaces as a heroine once again when she saves the life of Henry's aunt who was involved in a terrible car accident and lost a lot of blood. Amarachi came to her rescue, donating blood that saved her life. However, Amarachi advised the medical staff never to reveal her identity to the patient and her guardians. When it was revealed that Amarachi is actually the anonymous blood

donor, Henry searches for her but to no avail. Later, she is found dead, having committed suicide. Consequently, Henry feels bad and blames his family for the situation. He accuses his family of misleading him to treat Amarachi unfairly and tries to commit suicide over the loss of his loved one.

The Pastor's Wife (2009)

The film tells the story about a woman who married a church minister working in a local community of Nigeria. Both Nigerians, they met in the United States of America where the man was converted to Christianity and later trained as a church minister. While in the USA the two led a liberal life and it becomes difficult for the wife to adjust to life back in Nigeria. The woman tries in vain to teach her fellow women at the church about equality between male and female members of the congregation. She lectures the women's arm of the church on the need to strive for higher positions in the congregation. She urges them to dress as they want:- be it in trousers or mini-skirts arguing, "God is not interested in how we dress but rather in what goes on in our hearts". The pastor's wife, referred to as Sister Shade, meets stiff opposition with regards to her liberal views and lifestyle and becomes unpopular among her fellow women in the church. The women end up embarrassing her as they literally chase her out of their church group one day.

Later in the film, Sister Shade also annoys members of the general public with her carefree lifestyle. The general public are shocked by her 'loose' lifestyle which they describe as not befitting a married woman, let alone a pastor's wife; she drinks beer in the streets and engages in a sexual relationship with the husband of one of the church members. She attracts the wrath of the congregation who resort to bringing in

a junior pastor in order to give Shade's husband an opportunity to put his house in order. Sister Shade ends up enticing the junior pastor into a sexual relationship. The consequences are tragic;- when Pastor James catches his wife with his junior colleague in a sexual act inside the church. The junior pastor commits suicide and is found hanged inside the church. Pastor James sends his wife away, and out of frustration, he begins drinking and smoking in public.

In an act of self-defence, Sister Shade has always attributed the situation to her husband's lack of attention to her needs, "as a wife I need you more than your church members do. You are to blame. As a woman I need your love, your presence, and all that a man should give a wife. You are abandoning your responsibility as a husband to satisfy me, your wife, just to please members of your church".

The Last Vote (2002)

The film *The Last Vote* depicts the dark side of politics in a country endowed with abundant resources. The elite, mostly influential governing politicians and their associates monopolise the resources at the expense of the deserving population. Corruption is rife and political patronage is the order of the day. The film exposes the corrupt practices of the cabinet ministers and senior party officials in one of Nigeria's states. Government hospitals are running short of drugs and public roads are in disrepair. Money destined to purchase essential drugs disappears into politicians' pockets as does money meant to reconstruct and maintain the public roads. In the meantime, 30 expectant mothers have died due to poisoning whilst they were being treated at the ante-natal clinic in a public hospital.

Health officials have diverted drugs to private hospitals for money, and due to a shortage of drugs, they administer expired and incorrect medication, as a result of which some of the women died. The media get hold of the news and it is broadcast on television. It is a national tragedy and the State Governor Dr. Emezi Kalu addresses the nation on television and promises to act on the tragedy and to bring the culprits to book. As the governor is a political novice, who had just been planted in the leadership position by veteran political godfathers, the political hierarchy is undermining his authority. They are intent on ruining his political career. He faces impeachment which he survives by a single vote. The state governor makes swift changes; - he arrests the perpetrators of the alleged corrupt practices and the situation becomes sanitised. Life starts to have meaning for ordinary citizens.

The selfless spirit, compassion and love is demonstrated by the films' leading characters solidified in the Market Women Association whose members joined hands in fighting corruption and social injustices that affect fellow women. This suggests that both the producing and consuming nations, in this case Nigeria and Malawi, share a similar philosophy to life.

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into five main parts. These parts are further divided into chapters. Part I comprises chapters one and two. Chapter one is the introduction which presents an overview of the thesis discussions covering all the nine chapters. Chapter two is the contextual background which presents social, economic, cultural and political issues of Nigeria, as a producing nation of Nollywood films, and Malawi as the recipient nation of

these films. The chapter also presents and discusses the background to the development of film-making and cinema in both countries.

Part II comprises two chapters. Chapter three contains the literature review and the theoretical framework. The starts with introducing the theoretical frameworks on which this study hinges on before it gets into details of the scholarly works and debates on Nollywood and their relevance to this study. Such discussion will take place under the literature review in section one. Section two of chapter three introduces and discusses the study's main theoretical frameworks: continentalisation and Pan-Africanism. There is a detailed discussion of this theoretical framework which states the clear definition of these two concepts and their relevance to the study. Critically, the section demonstrates the relationship between these two terms or concepts. The section will go further in elaborating or demonstrating various aspects or manifestations of the concept of continentalisation. The chapter further presents and discusses other key theories that are useful in interpreting female representation in films and in analysing audiences' responses to films' portrayals in section three. The methodology employed in this study is detailed in chapter four. It will present an account of data collection and the sampling methods that the study employed in the fieldwork.

Part III is the Data Analysis segment of the thesis. This segment is covered in chapter five of the thesis. It presents a detailed approach with regard to the way the study processed both the film data and focus group data that led to the analysis sections of the chapter. The chapter is divided into two main sections of data analysis. The first sort of data analysis

involves the films or cinematic text. This is based on the researcher's perspective. The second sort of analysis is based on Malawian local audiences' responses to the films' representation of women.

Part IV comprises discussion chapters. There are four chapters: six to nine. The chapters will discuss the findings of the research as unveiled in chapter five (data analysis). The chapters discuss the study findings based on the data emerging from the focus group discussions. The focus group data comprise the primary data for the study. Chapter six considers 'Identity', and discusses audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films in relation to the theme of cultural identity. Chapter seven relates to 'Subjectivity' and discusses the variances in audiences' responses to female representation in films. Chapter eight is 'Appropriation', and it discusses how the Nollywood audiences in Malawi adopt and adapt portrayals in films and localise the gender or cultural elements in them to fit into their local contexts. Chapter nine discusses the implications of the findings. The chapter provides an analytical reflection of the major findings and considers the researcher's perspective of the debate or discussion that emerged during audiences' interpretation of the portrayals in films.

Part V contains the conclusion in chapter ten. The chapter is a review of the major issues discussed in the thesis. The chapter discusses the limitations and the recommendations of the study. Finally, this chapter will highlight the significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays out the contextual background of Nollywood films and the environment in which these films are produced and consumed globally. The chapter puts the social, economic, political and cultural contexts of Malawi and Nigeria into perspective.

Although some of the concerns presented might appear outside the area of film and gender / power relations, issues of economy, politics and culture define both Nigerian and Malawian society. In fact, these issues are helpful to enable the reader to understand and appreciate the extent to which the economic, cultural and political backgrounds of the two countries affect the development of the film industries. Likewise, this approach also helps the reader to understand and appreciate how Nollywood films affect or influence the social, economic and political landscape of Malawi and Nigeria. The understanding of the cultural, economic and geo-political context in which Nollywood operates and is consumed helps lay the foundations for the analysis of the claims made by the respondents in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis.

There are four sections in this chapter. Section one discusses Nigeria's social, economic and political context. The section endeavours to unpack how Nollywood is relevant to these socio-economic and political structures in relation to the theme of

continentalisation. Of significance in this section is the discussion of the history of the development of the film industry in Nigeria which links to the discussion of Nollywood in context in section two.

Section two presents Nollywood as a film industry in Nigeria in relation to its development and relevance to Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Further, the section looks at some thematic, conceptual and aesthetic issues associated with Nollywood videos from the consumers' viewpoint as well as from a scholarly perspective.

Section three describes Malawi's socio-economic, political and cultural context and introduces the status of gender relations across Malawian communities at all levels. Approaching Nollywood as a cultural institution, the section demonstrates the potential film has to bring about social change in respect of gender relations in Malawian communities. The section further introduces the history of broadcast television in Malawi and the current state of the film industry in the country and elaborates on how this affects the consumption of Nollywood films which is predominantly in video format.

Section Four explores the entry of Nollywood films into Malawi, their reception and diverse modes of consumption among the local film audiences. The section further discusses the issue of the language of presentation of these films to Malawian audiences. Nollywood is made in English and the section discusses how this affects the non-English speaking Malawians. According to the findings of this study, roughly four in every ten people that watch the films in the rural areas are either non-fluent in English or they do not speak English at all. By presenting some extracts

from respondents' discussions on the film's portrayal of women and the relevance to the audience gender relations, this section seeks to demonstrate the relevance of Nollywood beyond mere entertainment.

Thus, based on responses from audiences involved in the study, this section attempts to give a brief presentation and exploration of continentalisation, a theory that defines Nollywood films as a vehicle of cultural products from one African country to another. Omoniyi (2014) proposes continentalisation as an African social process modelled on globalisation by exploring the impact the films have as a cultural industry across the nation-state. He asserts that Nollywood facilitates the Pan-Africanism by exploring the homogenising tendencies of continentalisation. Gender relations are one of the homogenising tendencies that cut across the continent's national boundaries, and these films capture this aspect for audiences' consumption. Thus, despite the 'difference' in female representation seen in Nollywood, gender relations are arguably homogeneous across the continent. The films' portrayals, as discussed in chapters six to nine of the thesis, could therefore impact on reconstructing the public's perception of women.

The findings briefly outlined above are my own and as a researcher I have made a deliberate, arguably, unorthodox approach, to communicate to the reader about the overall outcome of my study. They are presented in this contextual chapter to sign post the larger picture or to give an overview picture of the detailed account of the findings later in the thesis from chapters five to ten. It is expected that, by presenting them in this summary form at this stage of thesis, they could prepare the reader to

situate themselves on the main areas of concern of this study as they go on reading the thesis.

SECTION ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE NIGERIAN FILM INDUSTRY

NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Nigeria has an estimated population of over 173 million, making it the most populous country of Africa and the eighth most populous country in the world (UNDP, 2014). The country is divided into 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja is the seat of government. Lagos is the former capital and Nigeria's largest city (AfDB, 2012). There are three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria: the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo predominantly located in the north, southwest and south east of the country respectively. There are also some significant minority ethnic groups including the Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv and Nupe. Whilst there are approximately 400 languages spoken by different groups in Nigeria (Heaton and Fayola, 2008), English has been the official language since 1960 following the British influence on the nation during the colonial era. Pidgin English, which is a combination of Nigerian languages and English, has also become a commonly used language (Faloya and Heaton, 2008). Code-switching is a practice common among the ethnic groups as a way to ease communication with others who do not speak their native language. Toribio and Bullock (2012) define code-switching as the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual speaker. For instance, the Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba switch between their mother tongues and English as a way of intercommunication. According to Ugochukwu (2009: 6) 'Engligbo' best defines a fusion of Igbo language and English. She

observes that although it is primarily used for business and inter-ethnic communication purposes, code-switching 'Engligbo' is becoming widely practised even in Igbo-Igbo interaction. Most Nollywood films have this element of code-switching whereby the characters change from English to their native language and back to English and many Nollywood films are characterised by Pidgin English.

Christianity and Islam are the two dominant religions in Nigeria with the former predominant in the south and the latter in the north of the country. These two religions form part of the discourse in some Nollywood films; melodramas depict tensions arising from the differences in religious ideologies between Christians and Moslems. This is often seen in plots where marriage between Moslem and Christian couples break down due to a clash of values. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis discuss such issues in scenes evident in *Not With My Daughter* (2002) whereby the marriage between a Moslem boy (Hussein) and a Christian girl (Ade) fails due to differences in cultural and religious ideologies. This highlights the suggestion that to a large extent the films depict dominant cultural aspects of Nigerian society (see Olayinka, 2013). Christian and Islamic values form a large part of cultural practices in Nigerian society. The same situation is mirrored in most of the African societies including Malawi, where some traditional cultural practices are influenced by either Islamic or Christian teaching.

There are several situations that demonstrate the extent to which culture and religion subjugate women in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. A recent case in point is the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in Nigeria's northeast Borno State by

Boko Haram Islamic militants on April 24, 2014 (Punch, 2014; Vanguard, 2014). The group's leader Abubakar Shekau announced that he would "sell" the hostages as "slaves in the market" and he asked the Nigerian authorities to release their members held in Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu, Lagos and Abuja States as a ransom.

Despite international calls for the schoolgirls' release, the militants have to date not changed their stance. Commentators suggest that the kidnapping of the Borno schoolgirls is Boko Haram's primary method of self-sustainable funding (Zenn, 2014). The implications of militants acts therefore implies that female members of society, as represented in the case of the abducted schoolgirls, are easy targets for interest groups to make political and religious gains against their adversaries. It further underlines how women are being subjugated and reduced to objects of material or monetary gains by some interested groups.

Nigeria was colonised by Britain in 1914 and gained its independence in 1960 (Afigbo, 1991). Colonial Nigeria was not created until the formal amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1885 and 1900 respectively (ibid). Following independence, the nation faced instability due to the politicisation of regional, ethnic and religious identities. This culminated in the secession bid by Biafra which led to the Civil War from 1967 to 1970 (Riemenschneider, 1983; Ojukwu, 1989; Thompson, 1990). The failure to install a civilian administration created a fertile ground for the military leaders to exert authoritarian rule over the people from 1983 to 1998. The military leaders imposed autocratic rule and people had limited freedom of expression.

During this period the film industry struggled to make its mark as filmmakers had to self-censor their works to avoid attracting undue attention from the political leadership. Olusegun Obasanjo became the first civilian president following his election in 1999 and since then, Nigeria has been under a civilian government. The retaining of a civilian government has enabled filmmakers to exercise reasonable freedom to express themselves and a good number of political films have emerged. However, critics have accused the industry of paying lip-service to the public. They criticise the filmmakers for not doing enough to expose the corruption and political failures of the civilian rulers (Haynes, 2003b; 2006; 2007a).

Economically, Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa (The Washington Post, 2014). The economy is predominantly primary product oriented: agriculture and crude oil (Krojer, 2011; AfDB, 2012). In 2011, oil and gas accounted for 79 per cent of local revenue and 71 per cent of export revenue (AfDB, 2012). Agriculture accounts for about 26.8 per cent of the country's GDP and employs about 70 per cent of the labour force. Its economic growth rate for the past decade has averaged 7.5 per cent annually, mainly driven by the non-oil sector (Human Development Report, 2011). In 2013 the country's GDP per capita was 3, 010 US dollars (Human Development Report, 2014). Film production has since emerging as one of the major economic driving force after oil and agriculture (The Telegraph, 2014). With the country's large population, consumer demand has been the main driving force behind such non-oil sector growth (AfDB, 2012). Despite oil being chief source of the country's revenue, it only employs about 0.01 per cent of the labour force (Ajasa, 2014).

However, the country's social indicators lag behind the average for Africa:- 63 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line of 1US dollar per day; 42 per cent do not have access to safe drinking water and 69 per cent do not have access to basic sanitation (World Development Report, 2014). The unemployment rate is high among the young, ranging from 23.9 per cent to 33 per cent in recent times. There are huge regional disparities in income and social outcomes in the country, with the north registering the highest levels of poverty and social deprivation compared to the south. Corruption is a major concern and is often cited as the chief factor for social and economic inequalities among the people and the regions. For instance, the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index places Nigeria 143rd out of 183 countries, increasing from 134th out of 178 countries in the year 2010 (UN Human Development Report, 2011; AfDB, 2012). The 2013 Human Development Index for the country is as low as 0.504 (UNDP, 2014). These are some of the social concerns that the films are expected to address through their portrayals. To what extent the films address society's issues is subject to debate, and hence, this thesis discusses gender and power relations as one such area.

GENDER ISSUES

Nigeria has had a gender policy in place since 2006 which clearly stipulates various actions to ensure gender equality is attained. However, the reality does not reflect the well-intentioned policies. Women constitute 56 per cent of the illiterate population and their participation in the labour market remains low. In the formal job sector, women constitute only one-third of the work force. In politics, there have been much fewer women serving in the cabinet than men in the post-military governments (UN

Human Development Report, 2011). According to UN Women Report on Africa (1995), gender-based educational processes, including curricula, educational materials and practices, teachers' attitudes and classroom interaction, reinforce existing gender inequalities. The report argues that girls and adolescents may receive a variety of conflicting and confusing messages on their gender roles from parents, teachers, peers and the media. The illiteracy rate shown above could project the picture that the population of females is higher than that of males in Nigeria. It arguably represent a disadvantage in acces to education among women than their male counterparts on a whole.

However, there are positives that countries such as Malawi could emulate from the Nigerian women's involvement in public life, beyond the statistical picture on literacy rate. There are more women employed as chief executives in Nigeria than in Malawi although the number remains significantly lower than men. It is further reported that the current government has included more women serving in senior positions including the cabinet than its predecessors. With Nollywood becoming an important cultural institution, there could be a legitimate expectation that the producers will make use of the film's influence to change people's mind-set on gender and power relations and drive the nation towards equal negotiating for men and women. For the purpose of this study, the discussions in the chapters five, six, seven and eight illustrate that the films have had some influence on the local audiences in Malawi and therefore have the potential to become agents of social change (see Fairclough, 1992).

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Nigeria is a regional power in West Africa. The country's economy represents approximately 55 per cent of West Africa's GDP. The country's population of 173 million provides the largest market in Africa. It is a founding member of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) and also a member of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS is a regional grouping of six countries and was founded in 1975:- Nigeria is a major financial contributor to ECOWAS as it hosts the body's secretariat, the parliament and the Court of Justice. The country regards ECOWAS as an institutional framework for developing fiscal support for the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). This initiative is aimed at unifying the region's armies and contains the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, Nigeria leads several initiatives towards regional integration including the formation of Customs Union, free movement of people across the borders, and an ECOWAS passport. Malawi is not a member of ECOWAS countries. At a continental level, Nigeria is a powerful member of the African Union (AU) and Nigeria's contribution and influence to AU in terms of operations and political frame work is significant (Krojer, 2011; AfDB, 2012).

It is therefore envisaged that the emergence of Nollywood would facilitate this regional or continental integration in terms of its cultural, economic and social contribution to the member states in Africa. It is little wonder that the Nollywood film industry is being used as a model in the development of film industries in fellow African countries. For instance, there is evidence that countries such as Uganda and

Tanzania are developing their own cinematic initiatives modelled on Nollywood (Haynes, 2007; 2010).

THE HISTORY OF THE FILM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

The history of film or cinema in Nigeria dates back to 1903 when the first motion pictures were reportedly screened for the first time in Lagos at the Glover Memorial Hall (Owens-Ibie, 1998). The films screened at this time were imported from overseas. Besides screening, various film organisations were established and tasked by the colonial administration with film-related issues in Nigeria and according to Owens-Ibie, the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established in 1939. It was later renamed as the Federal Film Unit (FFU) in 1947. The unit was responsible for handling film related issues and to propagate government policies on agricultural and health concerns through the screening of documentary films. The film units organised and ran a type of mobile free cinema that covered the district headquarters and major trading centres of the country. The documentary films were popular and were greatly patronised. They were screened alongside American cowboy films, a move intended to captivate and sustain attendance; the documentaries were usually screened before the cowboy films and in this way the video operatives were assured of patronage for the government's "educative" films. They knew that audiences would tolerate these prescribed agenda films as long as they were assured of being entertained by their favourite cowboy films at some point (Owens-Ibie, 1998).

Later, in the 60s and 70s, the first film production companies were established; Latola Film in 1962 and Calpeny Nigeria Limited in 1970. In fact, the current film

industry in Nigeria is highly indebted to the practitioners of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre that branched off from mainstream theatre to celluloid (Clark, 1979). Herbert Ogunde was one of the pioneers of Yoruba Theatre and produced the first celluloid films from theatres in the 1980s. His first films were *J'ayesinmi* (*Let the world rest*) and *Aiye* (*Life*) (Banham, Hill and Woodyard, 1994). However, in the 1980s, the culture of film and theatre-going collapsed due to safety and security concerns at night in the cities. Commentators have suggested that it is actually the country's economic downturn that dealt a big blow to the film industry. The government stopped subsidising the industry and many people lost their jobs due to retrenchment as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs) (Haynes, 1999). This left people in serious economic difficulty resulting in fewer people being able to afford the ticket cost demanded in cinemas. Arguably, the filmmakers were the worst hit as most film producers could not sustain 'expensive' celluloid film production. This therefore paved the way for the rise of a less powerful but more convenient form of film making using formats such as u-matic, super VHS and ordinary VHS cameras (Okome, 2000; Haynes, 1999; McCall, 2004; Ukata, 2010).

Eventually, these initiatives led to the production of video films, known as home movies. As economic pressures piled on the film industry, many filmmakers looked for less expensive ways of continuing with their trade. Hence, many of the celluloid film producers turned to video production as an alternative. Haynes (1999: 140) notes that the cost of producing a video is "about a tenth" of the price of a celluloid film. The low cost of production meant that filmmakers could produce more content, which, in turn accrued more revenue. During this time there was a boom in the

availability of inexpensive video cassette players in many homes in Nigerian cities. This factor accelerated the increase in more video film production and successful distribution. According to the statistics of the National Film Videos Census Board (NFVCB), in 1994, three video films were classified. This number rose to 177 in 1995, and further increased to 233 the following year. In 1998, the number shot up to 356 and in the year 2000 it rose to 712. In 2005, a record 1 711 films were produced. Other than this factor, the existence of a huge consumer market organised around home viewing contributed largely to the flourishing video production in the country (Haynes, 1999).

According to Shaka (2003), the use of the video format as a narrative medium of popular entertainment in Nigeria grew out of two factors: firstly, the fascination with modern technology, and secondly, the desire to take domestic problems and transform them into something creative. The photographic camera, according to Shaka, was important equipment for documenting ceremonies. He adds that the traditional photographers were the first set of people to commercially exploit the video camera:

In retrospect, the popularity of the video format as a narrative medium was first established in private and domestic domain as an equipment for ceremonial documentation. In the early days of its documentation, the work of the so called “video man” (camera man) was to document with the video camera such private ceremonies like weddings, child naming ceremonies, birthday parties, chieftaincy installation ceremonies, burial ceremonies and communal festivals. (Shaka, 2003:42)

Since then the local producers have been working together with African audiences without governmental or Western assistance, and without the help of international film festivals (Chowdhury et al., 2008). This initiative has had a great impact on African cinema. Haynes (2007a) states that in the early years, video films were shot cheaply on video format and were sold or rented as video cassettes, which were later turned into video compact discs (VCD). Most homes had a video cassette player. According to Haynes, apart from homes where these videos enjoyed large patronage, the films were also being screened in theatres, small video parlours, and in rural villages where exhibitors came with television screens, video cassette players or VCD and generators.

SECTION TWO

THE NOLLYWOOD FILM INDUSTRY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Film for us is just storytelling. You don't need someone to tell you how to make a story. In Nigeria we just do it in our way and we're doing something right because our films are seen all over the world. Nigeria produces 2000 films a year and it works for us.....Nigerians make films for themselves. (Igwe, 2006 in Ukata, 2010: 1)

Through their themes and storylines, Nollywood films depict the everyday life of the society they are produced from. The films, as suggested in the extract above, present or showcase the socio-economic, political and cultural phenomena that concern ordinary Nigerians (see Ukata, 2010). According to Johnson (2000), film is a medium for the promotion, propaganda and preservation of culture. By the end of the twentieth century, Nigeria had become a major player in the film industry both in Africa and globally. Its film industry, popularly known as Nollywood has developed so rapidly that today it is ranked third in the world after Hollywood (USA) and Bollywood (India). In fact, it is the second largest industry in terms of the volumes of films it produces annually (Al Jazeera, 2015; BBC World Service, 2014).

Jedlowski (2011) contends that the formulation of the term "Nollywood" does not represent the first time that the Nigerian film industry was compared to giant global film industries. Moreover, it does not represent the first time the industry is given a "-hood" attribute. He argues that the term "Nollywood" reflects the local discourse of the time. In other words, it reflects the aspiration of the then local film industry to

equate and rival its Indian (Bollywood) and American (Hollywood) counterparts. Given its humble beginnings as a sheer initiative of the commercial videographers in local Lagos markets, the adoption of Nollywood symbolised a bold and overt ambition of that time, as Jedlowski claims that

the fact that the video phenomenon should be considered “a film industry”; that this industry had a transnational, if not global, impact (resumed in its acquired “-hoodness”); and that, because of the combination of these attributes, it deserved to be compared to the two most successful film industries in the world, Hollywood and Bollywood. (2011:229)

However, the naming of the industry Nollywood faced opposition. Critics, arguing from the post-colonialism perspective, contend that the act of naming is in itself an act of symbolic control. They contest that the name signifies the imposition of a foreign label on a flourishing local phenomenon, which, they argue, symbolises the violence associated with colonialism. Shaka (2011) underlines the acrimony that the postcolonial critics made against naming the Nigerian film industry “Nollywood” in arguing it is a form of neo-colonisation, which, they fear advances Western propaganda.

Haynes (2007a) states that Nigerian video films referred to as “Nollywood” offer the strongest, most accessible expression of contemporary Nigerian popular culture. He further asserts that apart from being a cultural phenomenon, the economic force of Nollywood should also be considered. Haynes and Okome (2007) cited in Haynes (2007a), sum up in stating that the videos are a great success story for African

cinema in terms of regional economic production. The film industry helps create employment mostly in the informal sectors both in Nigeria and other countries that the videos are exported to elsewhere in Africa. According to this study's pilot study (2012), since the emergence of Nollywood there has been an increase in small scale commercial activities in urban and rural Malawi. The presence of many commercial video parlours, video vendors and video rental libraries generate regular incomes and sustain jobs in the informal market all over Malawi's communities.

As noted, according to Nigeria's National Film & Video Censorship Board (2014), Nollywood has become the country's major contributor to the economy after oil and agriculture. It contributes approximately 1.2 per cent of Nigeria's GDP and generates close to £3.1 billion annually to the country's economy (*The Telegraph*, 2014). Nigeria is becoming one of the world's largest economies. It rose from position 26 in April, 2014 (*The Washington Post*, 2014) to 23 in October of the same year (Human Development Report, 2014) and Nigeria has just replaced South Africa as Africa's largest economy (*The Washington Post*, 2014). Analysts attribute Nigeria's recent economic boost to the success of its film industry, Nollywood (BBC World Service, 2014).

At present, Nollywood films are broadcast on television all over Anglophone Africa and even on some Western television channels such as Sky TV in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the widespread use of videos has improved with technological advancement. Films are readily available with the advent of online access as viewers can log onto internet websites and gain easy access to these films.

According to Ukata (2010) and Haynes (2010), online websites include naijarules, nollywood.net, Nollywood.com, nigeriafilms.com, nigeriamovies.net and YouTube.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nollywood films can be viewed via the commercial channel DSTV 102, *Africa Magic*. This channel is especially dedicated to air African films, and Nollywood films dominate by far its broadcast airtime. With the availability of free-to-air digital television dishes on the market, most African viewers are able to access the films without even having to subscribe to the channel as is the case with DSTV. The free-to-air digital television compacts have channels that are especially set to show Nollywood films as one way of marketing the latest films.

NOLLYWOOD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO POLITICS OF THE STATE

Arguably, Nollywood can claim to have played a role in the shaping of public discourse in social and political issues. The 'video boom' in Nigeria since the early 1990s coincides with a period of political turmoil and deep crisis (Haynes, 2007:7). Commentators assert that video technology has enormous radical potential to change the political landscape arguing that it is cheap, mobile, and hence, the state apparatus can hardly control it. But the orientation of most video production has nevertheless been commercial and cautious in political matters. Critics have accused filmmakers of shying away from any political narrative of the time (Haynes, 2003b; 2006; 2007a). Haynes (2003) contends that despite evidence of the effects of the economic collapse and social anomalies, only a few films produced before the end of military rule in 1999 attempted to showcase a direct political analysis of the causes of the crisis, and fewer still can be seen as direct political interventions.

Krojer (2011) attests that during that time, film production, rather than journalism, could be understood as a sign of freedom of expression in Africa. However, the print media has had several limitations in playing its watchdog role in the military regimes. Every time the journalists directed criticism at the government, its top officials or the presidency it resulted in some of them being charged with sedition (Haynes, 2003). Thus, inciting rebellion against the government was the common charge media practitioners faced during this period whenever they crossed paths with the ruling regimes in their work. A case in point is the imposition of Decree 4 that was put in force on the 1st January, 1984 under the military dictatorship of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. The then Supreme Military Council promulgated Decree 4 of 1984: the public officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree 4 (<http://www.information.com/tag/decree4-4-of-1984/feed> and sunnewsonline.com › Home › Opinion). Decree 4 made it a criminal offence to publish any article that brought the government or any public officer into disrepute. During this period, two journalists Tunde Thompson and Nduka Iraboh of The Guardian Newspapers were arrested and imprisoned for breaking this law (nationalmirroronline.net/new/decree-4-the-trial-conviction-of-two).

However, the emergence of Nollywood, with its ever-growing popularity and influence in the Nigerian population raises some hope of filling the gap left by mainstream, print journalism. Nevertheless, over time, the productions have often been characterised as apolitical. The rare and significant exception under consideration here is the Gbenga Adewusi's production *Maradona* (1993; also known as *Babangida Must Go*), a Yoruba film that openly critiqued the military

regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. In particular, the film, released in 1993, was an immediate response to the annulment of the presidential election by Babangida held in June the same year. Other productions such as Tunde Kelani's *Koseegbe* (1996) criticises corrupt practices in the Civil Service and Kenneth Nnebue's critique on economic and political predation in *Dirty Deal* (1993) and *Rituals* (1997) links political power and dark occult forces.

The return to a civilian government has had its challenges, and has brought a wave of films with political subjects, including a two-part lightly fictionalised chronicle of General Sani Abacha *Stubborn Grasshopper* (2001). It is not until the end of the military dictatorship in 1999 that the market began to flood with political films but for an apparent commercial motive as "they were recognised as a money-making trend" (Haynes, 2006: 214). However, Haynes appears optimistic at the direction the filmmakers have taken regarding bringing political debate to their audiences:

The end of military rule in 1999 was not the solution to Nigeria's political problems, but it has created an environment for more open debates in which topics for discussion can be aired. The video industry used this opportunity to place an emphasis on political topics, with different filmmakers producing films about presidents, dictatorships and wars. (2006:526-528)

Despite the claim of political freedom in contemporary civilian governments, filmmakers are cautious in the way they craft the political narratives in their storylines for fear of reprisals from the government. The Censorship Board is a case in point. However, the filmmakers seem to have found a way around the censorship body's ruthlessness. Krojer (2011) notes that to discuss political problems in feature films, filmmakers take a rumour from society, turn it into a script and then throw it

back to society. In order to achieve this, she adds, they use metaphor, as it would be too dangerous to confront the government in a direct way. She observes that any film deemed controversial would force The Censorship Board not to release it and the filmmakers would therefore not make a profit. Okhai (2010) cited in Krojer (2011:31) states that the onus is on the filmmakers to tread carefully in the way they present their political critiquing in their production:

It is a matter of how someone tells his or her story. If a film is okay the Censor Board decides to register it. They do not clamp down on filmmakers if they show for instance corruption in their movies but only if it begins to border on the current president in a direct way and if the people who work at the Censors Boards are not feeling comfortable with it. They are also afraid of losing their own jobs.

It can therefore be asserted that the effort of some filmmakers in coming up with political themes in their production during and after military dictatorship suggests that political critiquing has been commonly practised in these videos. This underlines the filmmakers increasing boldness to address political issues in contemporary society. Thus, Nollywood films can claim political relevance in the public sphere. This is owing to the fact that the films highlighted earlier in this discussion demonstrate that Nollywood can promulgate public discourses that border on contemporary social and political life.

THE QUESTION OF GENRE IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

The whites are going their own way. But we too are going their way. That is not right. We should go our own way. (Isola, 2008:14)

Up until late 2004, there are claims that Western critics have privileged Nollywood as a “curio” (Okome, 2007: 2). For them Nollywood cannot exist outside of the

cultural and institutional framework of Hollywood despite the undisputed difference that these films have made to African cinematic life and discourse. Proponents of Nollywood state that such ambivalence towards the films suggests taking the local audience of Africa for granted. However, empirical evidence demonstrates that the attitude shown by its critics does little to dampen the excitement and enthusiasm of the local audience (see chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis). Further, it does nothing to shake the confidence and faith of the filmmakers. The above quote confirms this observation and supports the empirical evidence as discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In this study, Nollywood is not being judged against other film cultures such as Hollywood, but seen from an African perspective in which Nollywood films deal with African stories and as such the films talk to African audiences that are familiar with these stories.

To a local African viewer, the Nollywood film is about mirroring their own life and re-telling their own (African) stories (see Ugochukwu, 2011). Ukata (2010:19) sums up: "Nigerian videos are grappling with topical issues and anxieties emanating from the society that generates the narrative": The above description suggests that fluidity in terms of themes and genre in Nollywood films is evident. The narratives in the films overlap each other and in some, if not most cases, it becomes difficult to separate the genre elements. This makes it rather difficult to classify a film under a single or dominant genre category (see Chanan, 2007). Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that melodrama is the common element of genres identified with most Nollywood films.

Haynes (2006) attests melodrama as a genre that defines Nollywood films. He states that there are three main types of genres that signify Nollywood films. A key characteristic of melodramatic films is that they are too simplistic about performance and the types of narratives, themes and music that reoccur throughout the plot. Family melodrama tends to infiltrate all other genres. All six films that were used as a case study for the field study are melodramas: *Not With My Daughter* (2002), *The Pastor's Wife* (2009), *The Comforter* (2009), *Royal Fight* (2011), *The Last Vote* (2001) and *Mr & Mrs* (2011). Chapter four of the thesis (methodology) highlights the justification for this selection.

Another common genre characterising most Nollywood films centres on traditional rulership (Haynes, 2006 and Krojer, 2011). This film genre dwells on the kingdoms or royalty as a theme. Filmmakers either demonstrate the relevance of royalty to the modern African society or, conversely, they use the film to criticise the relevance of this establishment in present day African communities. *Royal Fight* (2011), one of the films used in the field study, is an example. This genre is comprised of a contemporary African royalty or kinship that manifests both the modern and traditional African leadership and political structures. On one hand, this genre serves to preserve the cultural heritage of rulership among the African societies, and on the other hand, the genre symbolises the extent the old practices, despite being maintained by the cultural institutions, are evolving.

Other than melodrama and traditional rulership, Haynes (2006) adds the crime thriller as a genre associated with Nollywood videos. However, this genre is not as

common as the melodrama and traditional rulership. In fact, the crime thriller as a genre in Nollywood films is introduced differently from its Hollywood counterpart. As explained earlier in this discussion, there is an element of rituals in the context of the crime thriller, for instance, criminal characters use magic to blind guards thereby giving easy passage for the criminals. In some case, the money they steal or proceeds from the crime are multiplied using magic or *juju*. Ritual displays are at the centre of every action depicted in the play. Krojer (2011) suggests that the display of ritual and money has a resemblance to real life within the Nigerian traditional culture.

It is worth noting that due to the nature of the storylines of Nollywood films, which are often generated from the people's daily life experiences, many of these films may contain more than one sub-genre. In other words, the films are mostly 'generic hybrids' and therefore analysis of most Nollywood films would lead to the identification of several genres and sub-genres which are intertwined.

As the question of genre remains a contested issue in Nollywood film, perhaps some background of Nollywood films and its association with traditional African cultural art would help to explain why the issue of genre is probably an elusive subject to handle. Kerr (1995:114) states that some leading African arts scholars in drama including Wole Soyinka tried to investigate indigenous genre in an effort to establish their "homologous" effect on contemporary literary and "ideological movements." This research gave birth to dramatic genres that may be called neo-traditional drama that were deeply anchored in traditional African folklore and myth. These help to inculcate African cultural and aesthetic values into the literary drama. Consequently,

experiments of literary dramatists with cultural adaptation were later transferred to the first Nigerian film productions. This was possible as most people involved in the literary drama such as Soyinka were also actively involved in the early film initiatives in Nigeria. Thus, they attempted to infuse elements of traditional aesthetics into filmic art (Ukata, 2010). These experiments were also transferred to video productions leading some scholars to conclude that these African (Nigerian) films cannot escape engagement with the cultural assumptions and traditions of the society that it generates (Ukadike, 1994). This is evident in the productions. Since their inception, Nollywood films have engaged with traditional and modern themes ranging from, among other subjects, religion, culture, and politics to domestic issues.

The debate on genre in Nollywood can be traced to the films' association with the early Yoruba filmmakers such as Hubert Ogunde and Adeyemi Afolayan whose works demonstrated their effort to maintain links with their cultural heritage (Adeleke, 2005). Adeleke states that the early Yoruba filmmakers, like the literary dramatists, similarly tried to identify Yoruba traits such as Yoruba ontology, cosmological beliefs, forms of governance, and gender relations. He contends the filmmakers use these in their efforts to bring 'authentic' Yoruba cultural values into their films. Ogundele (2000:100) suggests that the travelling theatre, and in this respect, Nollywood films, have their "orientation from the *alarinjo* itinerant entertainment tradition". He notes that the *alarinjo* itinerant entertainment tradition mixes spectacles of wonder and magical transformations with acrobatic dances and haunting music in a way that is continuous with the world of folklore. This explains the various forms of adaptations and influences that the culture of folklore has on

Nollywood films and highlights Diawara's (1996:210) contention that "African cinema builds on folklore (oral tales) historical or cosmological legends." The influences of the traditional cultural values have also extended to soap operas and form part of the present day art of film production. These traditional cultural values influence present day film production to a large extent. Such influences are reflected in the way themes, characters, and languages are construed in the films.

Consequently, Nollywood films have based their sub-genres on folklore in many respects in their productions. For example, as stated in Ukata (2010), the "Ifo" narratives are a sub-genre of Igbo folklore and are used to reinforce patriarchal ideologies in the Igbo society. Ifo narratives thrive on the Mother Africa trope, which, she states it prescribes the behavioural patterns that women should be associated within the community. The storylines often portray young girls who conform to the societal values regarding marriage. For instance, it could portray that girls who marry suitors approved by their parents live happy lives with their spouses but those who defy their parents' choice and pick their own suitors become outlaws and suffer great calamities in their life.

Another theme deriving from folklore is the Cinderella trope which highlights the issue of gender relations (Ukata, 2010). For instance, it would show girls powerless and suffering as a result of societal injustice who then rise up and become an overnight celebrity who wield power in society. A related device dealing with the issue of gender relations is the romantic trope based on a love triangle. For instance, the films would depict a scenario where young lovers face rejection from both sets of

parents who refuse to allow them to marry but they defiantly go ahead with the wedding and live a happy and prosperous life (Ukata, 2010). Therefore, the thematic influences of oral traditions in the construction of films show that filmmakers do not only borrow, but also adopt oral themes (Thackway, 2003). Critics contend that when some of the themes are adopted in the films, like in the case of the Mother Africa trope, they lead to the suggestion that women in traditional African patriarchal societies are denied the opportunity to negotiate choices about their own life. This is often not the case with most traditional cultures in the continent. Stratton (1994:53) expresses her reservation regarding the adoption of characterisations like Mother Africa: “the flip side of the Mother Africa trope serves to reproduce the attitudes and beliefs necessary for preserving the otherness of women and hence to perpetuate their marginalisation in society.”

It can therefore be argued that most traditional African societies recognise and domesticate equal power relations between men and women with both gender having clear demarcated roles. There are some societies that are matriarchal however: cultural practices privilege women to the extent that they have more political power than men. In this regard, women are more empowered than men. Nollywood would therefore base their storylines modelled on the cultures that represent a balance in gender and social relations between men and women before their audiences. It can safely be stated that the six case study films in respect to this present work area fair representative of Nollywood films’ common genres.

THE RELEVANCE OF NOLLYWOOD TO POPULAR CULTURE

The concept of popular culture is a complex and contested one. Fabian (1997:18) outlines different connotations of the term ‘popular culture’. Firstly, he states the term suggests contemporary cultural expressions carried out by masses which include modern elitist and traditional ethnic culture. Secondly, he notes that the term implies historical conditions characterised by mass communication, mass production and mass participation. Thirdly, he argues that it relates to a challenge to accepted beliefs in the superiority of ‘pure’ or ‘high’ culture. Lastly, he states it signifies “‘potentially at least, processes occurring behind the back of established powers and accepted interpretations and, thus, offers a better conceptual approach to decolonisation of which it is undoubtedly an important element” (ibid).

Other scholars offer various definitions. Okome (2014) views popular culture as those “cultural artefacts, produced within complex socio-cultural formations”. Barber (1997) regards popular culture as those genres that speak to the existential realities and struggles of ordinary people. Barber however notes that the term signals a history of conflicts, assumptions and problems bordering on their cultural forms. She argues that this concept is problematic when applied to most African societies because people are bound by kinship, language, community membership and patronage “people are neither the rural, idyllically remembered ‘folk’ nor urban industrial proletariat...” (ibid: 2).

Based on the above definition and interpretation of popular culture, it is safe to suggest that Nollywood films belong to popular culture. Evidence in the field

suggests that the films are consumed by a wide spectrum of people across Nigeria and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa irrespective of viewers' class or social distinctions within society. Ukata (2010: 12) observes that "the fact that themes and techniques are uniquely African often renders them identifiable and more appreciable to African audiences." She adds that "Nollywood videos appeal to a wide cross-section of audiences and within the same familial space, they are patronised by the houseboy, kids, wife and the husband as the stories have relevance to their existence." (ibid). Abah (2008) further suggests that Nollywood narratives are easy to relate to because they carry vital information on a wide range of issues both at personal and communal levels.

SECTION THREE

DEVELOPMENT OF FILM CULTURE IN MALAWI

MALAWI'S POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Malawi was a British colony from 1891 until 1963. It gained its independence in 1964 under Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The country was under the one party rule of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) between 1963 and 1993. During this era, the film industry failed to develop because of autocratic censorship. In 1993, Malawians voted for a multiparty system of government and subsequently ushered in a new party to replace MCP in 1994. Malawi adopted a presidential system of government alongside the first-past-the post-electoral system. Bakili Muluzi with his United Democratic Front (UDF) took over the country's leadership in 1994. Bingu wa Mutharika and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) succeeded Muluzi and the UDF in 2004. Over this time, freedom of expression in general and in the film industry has had the opportunity to develop due to the emphasis on human freedom (Lwanda, 1993; 2009).

However, Malawi's struggling economy has made it virtually impossible to develop a film industry even after two decades of multiparty democracy. The country's socio-economic status is an indication of Malawi's poor standing and that makes it difficult for the nation to invest in the local film industry. For instance, poverty

remains high especially in the rural areas with a Human Development Index in 2013 of 0.414, below the average of the Sub-Saharan region which is 0.463. Rural areas constitute about 80 per cent of Malawi's population. Incomes remain very low with Gross Net Income per Capita of 226 US dollars in 2013 (www.indexmundi.com).

Following the sudden death of Mutharika in 2012, the then vice-president, Joyce Banda ascended to the presidency according to the country's Constitutional provision. The Malawi Constitution permits the ascendancy of the vice-president to the presidency immediately if the incumbent dies or becomes incapacitated without the need to conduct fresh elections for the period the former occupant was expected to serve. Banda became Malawi's first female president and Africa's second female president in history. However, her rule was short-lived as she and her ruling People's Party (PP) were voted out of power in the elections of May 2014. This was the first election that Banda contested in her own capacity as a presidential candidate and Banda and the ruling party trailed third to the opposition candidate Arthur Peter Mutharika and the Democratic People's Party (DPP). Critics contend that Banda's failure to secure the presidency is due to the voters' low opinion of women. They argue that her poor performance in the polls, despite having the advantage over other candidates as an incumbent, confirms the belief that Malawian voters have no confidence in women to hold crucial leadership positions. This is one of the many issues that form gender narratives in Malawian communities. Arguably, such public gender narratives influence the respondents in their discussion of the female representation in the case study films.

Demographically, Malawi is divided into four regions, namely, southern, central, northern and eastern. Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 139 persons per square kilometre (National Statistics Office, Malawi, 2008). In its 2013 report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates a population density of 138 persons per square kilometre (UNDP, 2014). The 2008 Population and Housing Census indicated a population of 13.1 million which was estimated to reach 15.4 million by 2012 (ibid). The UNDP 2014 report indicates the country's population is estimated to reach over 16 million by 2013. With a growth rate of over 2.8 per cent, it makes the country one of the fastest growing populations in the Sub-Saharan region. Malawi is the least urbanised country in Africa with 20 per cent of its population living in the city. However, it has one of the highest urbanised rates in the world at 6 per cent per year.

Socially, there are acute income inequalities in Malawi with large sections of society marginalised. The average Malawian lives on less than 1US dollar per day. Malawi is amongst the poorest countries in the world, ranking 166 out of 178 on the Human Development Index in 2011(Human Development Report, 2014).

Culturally, Malawi is a multi-ethnic nation comprising of the following dominant ethnic groups: Chewa, Yao, Lomwe, Tonga, Tumbuka, Nkhonde, Ngoni, Sena, Mang'anja and Nyanja. These ethnic groups speak different languages. However, the Malawi Congress Party led regime declared Chichewa as a national language and about 90 per cent of Malawian population do speak and understand Chichewa. This made my study easy as I used Chichewa language in the data collection. For the

purpose of this study, there are two marriage and inheritance cultural systems commonly in practice across all the ethnic groups in Malawi: matrilineality and patrilineality. In the matrilineality system, a man lives on the wife's family land. Under this cultural system, issues regarding inheritance including chieftaincy revolve around the female members of the family. On the face of it, power is in the hands of women but in reality men take control of women at various levels as uncles, husbands, brothers and clan leaders. In patrilineal system involves the wife living on the husband's family land, with the power revolving around the male members of the family (Kathewera-Banda et al., 2011; Peters, 1997).

The northern region of Malawi is predominantly a patrilineal society. All the region's ethnic groups practise patrilineal marriage and an inheritance cultural system. The central, southern and eastern regions are predominantly matrilineal societies except the Shire Valley districts of the southern region where the Sena tribal group practise a patrilineal system (Mandala, 1984). The two marriage and inheritance cultural systems and practices introduced above impact on the gender and power relations between male and female members of the communities involved (Kathewera-Banda, 2011; White, 2010). Thus, the cultural differences as a result of these two opposing marriage and inheritance systems permitted me to anticipate differences in data collected from the participants spread across these cultural communities. Although women in both matrilineal and patrilineal communities are subjected to patriarchal dominance, previous studies suggest that women in matrilineal communities have an advantage over their counterparts in patrilineal system when it comes to negotiating power relations with men (Chimbuto, 2011 and

White, 2010). This study therefore hopes to offer suggestion to build on the existing 'loose' negotiating power of some women in selected matrilineal communities. Likewise, it hopes to offers suggestions on closing the relationship gap between men and women in patrilineal communities. In such scenarios, women in both communities potentially will have a negotiating power with their male counterparts.

The issue of marriage and inheritance customs is pertinent in the understanding and appreciation of the extent to which such practices play in the construction of gender and sex perceptions and attitudes towards women. In particular, it helps my interpretation and analysis of respondents' reaction to female portrayals in Nollywood films.

GENDER RELATIONS

Malawi has a Gender Inequality Indicator of 0.54, and ranked 120 among the world's 146 countries in 2011. This underlines the belief that there are large disparities between men and women in the country. Women work longer hours and have less time for income earning activities due to the burden of domestic work. The World Economic Forum ranked Malawi 65 out of 135 countries in its 2011 Global Gender Gap. More than half of the women in Malawi have not had a basic education. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys due to early marriage, motherhood and family responsibilities.

Despite gender equality being an integral part of the overall national development agenda, there are challenges to realise this ideal. For instance, there has been a slight increase in the number of women candidates and women members of parliament in

the 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009 parliamentary elections. The increase in the number of female candidates entering into the legislative assembly rose from 5.6 per cent in 1994 and to 8.3 per cent in 1999. The number increased further to 14 per cent following the 2004 elections and to a further 22 per cent in the 2009 elections.

However, the number of women candidates and the subsequent winning female candidates decreased in the 2014 parliamentary elections declining from 22 per cent in 2009 to 15.6 per cent in 2014 (MEC, 2014). Commentators blame male patriarchal dominance for women's underperformance in the national elections which they argue extends to homes, workplaces and public places (Malawi Voice, 2014). They contend that the decline in female parliamentary candidates' performance in the polls reflect the low opinion that most voters have of female politicians. Men have always been blamed for the country's failure to attain gender equality and critics accuse men of using unfair tactics in all spheres of life resulting in women's marginalisation at all levels (Malawi National Gender policy, 2008).

At the executive level, any incumbent president faces the call to appoint more women into cabinet. There are only three female ministers against 17 males in the 20 member cabinet hired by Malawi's president when he entered office in June, 2014. These statistics suggest that the country must go a long way to achieve a society whose attitudes, perceptions and opinions of women are similar to that of men. This is where the study of Nollywood comes in as a way of exploring its potential to have a social effect or impact on the audiences' attitudes, perceptions and opinions in favour of women.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Malawi is a member of several regional/continental bodies: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), EAC-COMESA-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area Negotiations and African Union, SADC Gender Links Network, Southern African Customs Union, African Union Gender Protocol, SADC Parliamentary Forum and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). These are just a few of the social, economic, political and trade institutions to which Malawi belongs. This fits in well with this study's theoretical framework of continentalisation, which explores and explains the flow of products, ideas and talent within the African continent (Omoniyi, 2014b). The study is focused on examining and demonstrating Nollywood films as a vehicle to promote continentalisation. In the sphere of this study, culture and gender relations are the focus on which the films are being discussed among the viewers outside Nigeria, and in this case, Malawi.

BACKGROUND TO CINEMA/ FILM WATCHING IN MALAWI

Little has been written on Malawi's cinematic or film background. The dearth or absence of such literature is one of the major factors triggering this study. To begin with, Malawi has no recorded cinematic or even video producing history. There is no established film industry in the country except the on and off local or foreign feature film productions. In the 1940s and 1950s, the British government used films to educate peasants to grow tobacco (<http://www.filmbirth.com/malawi.html>).

However, commercial cinema in Malawi emerged during the colonial era as a network through the three regions of the federation namely: Southern Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (present day Zambia) and Nyasaland (present day Malawi). The network would source films for viewing in the respective states. Commercial cinema in the federation obtained their films from various sources. The larger cinemas acquired their films direct from African Consolidated Theatre, which imported films from the East African Circuit (Nsapato, 2003).

During this time, the federal authorities had some concerns over the censorship of the films shown to the natives and as a result, the censorship committee was formed to address these concerns. The committee was responsible for protecting 'uneducated' and 'unsophisticated' Africans from the impact of films that were deemed unsuitable for them (Nsapato, 2003). Films that contained revolutionary narratives or those with explicit romantic images were classified as unsuitable for the local audiences. Often films from Britain and the USA did not come under heavy censorship as they were regarded as having already been censored. However, films from other areas such as Italy or Japan had to go through strenuous censorship at Salisbury, in the then Southern Rhodesia (Report of the Intergovernmental Working Party of Film Censorship- Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1960).

Censorship was centralised in Salisbury for the three territories. This set up was considered appropriate whereby the films arrived in the federation three days before the proposed date of the screening (ibid). However variations in operational practice created differences among players involved in the administration of the films across

the three territories. Modes of censorship material led to inconsistency in border/regional inclinations, which tended to bring film censorship into disrepute (ibid). In addition, the emergence of the problem of discrimination on racial grounds regarding which films could be watched by which racial group stifled the development of cinema in the three territories. According to Nsapato (2003), often films would be edited for a particular race, and some films were classified for exhibition to Europeans only. He contends that this was a ploy meant to deliberately exclude Africans. Oral evidence suggests that this type of exclusion was already generating bitterness and hostility between the local audiences and the authorities involved in the organisation of the shows.

With the phasing out of government-controlled cinema in the federation, commercial cinema began to emerge later in the early 1950s in Malawi (Nsapato, 2003). Oral evidence indicates that until the early 1990s, Malawi's major cities were preoccupied with the cinemas. Cinema houses and drive-ins formed the pivotal point of social life especially for the young outgoing town dwellers. Nsapato (2003) states that in Lilongwe, cinematograph activities centred around the Area 47 drive-in and in the commercial city, Blantyre, where the leading outlets included Apollo, Queens Cinemas and the Money-men drive-in as well as mobile cinema.

However, by the early 1990's, most of the outlets had closed, with Apollo Cinema the last to close down in 1993. Several factors are attributed to the end of cinema in Malawi. According to Nsapato (2004), very old films were being shown when at the same time other parts of the world offered the best and latest film releases of the

time. Perhaps the defining factor was the availability of video cassette players on the local market. Nsapato states that for the first time, a large number of urban residents started acquiring video cassette players and television sets at affordable prices. Oral evidence among the cinema patrons of the 1990s in urban locations of Lilongwe and Blantyre suggests that they stopped visiting the cinema houses due to the availability of foreign films on the local market. They instead opted to remain at home watching the films on their televisions.

TELEVISION BROADCAST IN MALAWI

Background to Television in Malawi

The first television station in Malawi was MBC TV, formerly known as Television Malawi. It opened on the airwaves in April, 1999. The second television station is TV Luntha, owned by Montfort Fathers and based in Balaka, was licensed in 2005. All for Jesus (AFJ) and Calvary Family TV followed later in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Currently there are 26 licensed television stations. However, most of the television stations are not operational yet due to government delays in setting up the digital broadcasting migration infrastructure. Once this infrastructure is in place, all television stations are expected to be available. The current ones are available on the analogue system.

The table below shows the status of television broadcasting in Malawi:

No.	Licence	Category	Location	Operational/ Non

				operational
1.	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)	Public National Television Broadcaster	Blantyre	Operational
2.	All for Jesus (AFJ) Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Operational
3.	Television Luntha	Community of Interest Television (National)	Balaka	Operational
4.	Channel for All Nations (CAN)	Geographical Community Television	Lilongwe	Not operational
5.	Galaxy Television	Private National Television	Lilongwe	Not operational
6.	African Bible College (ABC)	Community of Interest	Lilongwe	Operational

	Television	Television		
7.	Gateway Television	Private National	Lilongwe	Not operational
8.	Chancellor College (Chanco)Television	Geographical Community Television	Zomba	Not operational
9.	Times Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Operational
10.	Zodiak Television	Private Television (Regional)	Lilongwe	Operational
11.	Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Television	Community of Interest National	Blantyre	Not operational
12.	Timveni Television	Community of Interest National	Lilongwe	Operational
13.	Good News Broadcasting	Community of Interest	Lilongwe	Not

	System	National		operational
14.	BETA Television	Private National Television	Lilongwe	Not operational
15.	Joy Television	Private Regional Television	Blantyre	Not operational
16.	Luso TV	Private National Television	Lilongwe	Operational
17.	Tele-Pursuit Television	Private National Television	Lilongwe	Not operational
18.	Matindi Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
19.	Ufulu Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational

20.	Pentecostal Life Television	Private National Television	Lilongwe	Not operational
21.	Sunrise Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
22.	Rainbow Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
23.	Angaliba Television	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
24.	Television Islam	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
25.	Independent Television Networks	Private National Television	Blantyre	Not operational
26.	Laura Television	Private National	Blantyre	Not operational

		Television		
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(Malawi Communications and Regulatory Authority-Macra, 2013)

As stated earlier in the section, Malawi had one television channel, MBC since 1999. Three more religious channels came in after a decade. It is only in 2013 when a record number of broadcasters were licensed to open television channels. Regarding Nollywood film, MBC TV has had Nollywood films on its weekly schedule for all these years. Viewers were able to follow the Nollywood film episodes twice a week in the evenings. They were sponsored films and the broadcaster was under obligation to show them as scheduled. They were called super story and commanded a lot of followers.

It can therefore be fair to claim that these MBC TV Nollywood films played a big role in motivating local people to watch these films. This eventually led to many sourcing the copies at the market and buy their own video players. The same can not be safely claimed regarding the private/ religious TV channels. As Nollywood films are at times at odds with religious teachings, the church controlled channel could not find them sustainable. The other private channels do show them but not many are on air in full force as I am completing this thesis. Most of the private TV channels have their own audiences and urban youthful audiences are their priority, apparently.

However, Nollywood popularity is such huge that both the urban and villagers have a clear idea where to get the copies from. As a matter of fact, as shown in the

Appendix Nine, there are improvised video show centres/ parlours in the villages where audiences watch the films as pay per video on a device that uses a battery.

SECTION FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF NOLLYWOOD FILMS IN MALAWI

There is no available literature that examines the emergence of Nollywood films in Malawi. Unwritten accounts of the films' reception in Malawi suggest that Nollywood films started circulating in Malawi in the 1990s. Similar to their counterparts in Nigeria, the advent of inexpensive video cassette players in the 1990s made it possible for more Malawians in urban areas to watch films. At that time, Chinese and Western films were the most popular films. Commercial video parlours were common in the country's urban and semi-urban areas where young people patronised their 'favourite' Chinese Kung-Fu films.

With the emergence of Nollywood videos on the Malawi market, most video show houses and households owning video cassette players began playing the films as home entertainment as well as a commercial venture alongside Western and Chinese films. Commentators say that the opening of the national television in 1999 marked an era for Nollywood videos to become widely known among Malawians. The then sole national television broadcaster, TVM, now MBC TV, aired Nollywood films twice a week during prime time on Thursday evenings 9:00-9:30pm and Saturday evenings 9:00pm -10:00pm. This programming continued for years. The programme

Super Story used to air various Nollywood films. In fact, *Super Story* fast turned out to be a ‘must watch’ television programme slot on the sole national television channel. The films are still aired on MBC TV and despite the fact that there are other channels competing for the viewership, MBC TV still commands a large following and controls 65 per cent of the local television audiences (Kanyang’wa and Mkwaila, 2011).

In reaction to its popularity, most viewers purchased VHS, VCD or DVD copies of Nollywood films. As most of these copies were pirate copies, it made the price affordable for viewers from all economic backgrounds. As Nollywood’s popularity increased, most commercial video houses showed the films alongside the then traditional Western and Chinese Kung-Fu films. At present, most of these commercial video homes, especially in the rural areas, have stopped showing Western and Chinese Kung-Fu films in favour of Nollywood videos. Home entertainment too has become synonymous with Nollywood films.

RECEPTION OF NOLLYWOOD AND MODES OF CONSUMPTION AMONG MALAWIAN AUDIENCES

Home Entertainment

Video Players

At present, Nollywood films remain by far the most popular among Malawian audiences for various reasons discussed in this study in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Most Malawians watch the films in their homes. Almost all the households that own video cassette players watch Nollywood films. The films are a source of home

entertainment in the absence of organised cinema theatres. Those who do not own video cassette players watch these films in the homes of relations, friends and neighbours who own the equipment. McCall (2002) shares his experience of the role the extended family set-ups played in popularising the then infant Nollywood film industry. He states that members of the community not owning television screens used to gather in the homes of relations to watch the films.

Television

As previously mentioned, the emergence of television channels offered an opportunity for easy accessibility of the films by the masses across Malawi. Most of the local television channels have slots for Nollywood films in their weekly programme schedules. In addition to the emergence of television channels, the availability of inexpensive free-to-air digital satellite dishes on the local market enables easy and free accessibility to the films. These free-to-air digital satellite dishes have television channels which show Nollywood films. Most of the films shown are new releases and the filmmakers offer them to these free channels as a window to market their new films. (see Appendix: 10)

In some homes, especially those of the ‘middle class’ and the ‘elite’ in urban locations, the commercial digital satellite television (DSTV) is available for a monthly subscription fee. DSTV has a special channel 102, *Africa Magic*. This channel airs many African films. Nollywood films are evidently dominant on this channel. The table below presents local and international television channels that are most viewed in Malawi:

DStv Bouquet**Free to Air****Local Channels**

Aljazeera	Euro News	One Gospel	Adonai	MBC TV
Animal Planet	FIFA	SET	BTV	Luntha TV
Animax	FTV	Sky News	CCTV	All for Jesus (AFJ)
BBC	GO	Summit	CNBA	African Bible College (ABC)
BBC-L	Hallmark	SuperSport	Emmanuel	Times TV
Blits	History	SuperSport 1	ETV	Zodiak TV
Bloomberg	Home	SuperSport 2	Euro News	Timveni TV
BTV	Learn	SuperSport 3	God TV	Luso TV
Cartoon	MM1	SuperSport 6	IQRAA	Calvary Family TV

Channel O	MM2	TBN	Manna	
CNN	MNA	TCM	Press TV	
Crime	MNET	Trace	SABC	
Discovery	My TV		Spirit World	
Disney	NATGEO			
African Magic	Zone Reality			
E!	TSN			
Euro	Travel			

(Afro Management, 2010 and Macra, 2013)

Pay per view make shift video parlours or video show houses

As it will be discussed in the methodology section in chapter 4 of this study, mostly in the rural and semi-urban areas, people watch Nollywood films in commercial video rooms or houses on a pay per view basis. The commercial video house operatives charge people per single title to be viewed. The market is informal and unregulated and consequently most of the films shown are pirate copies.

According to data collected during the pilot and main fieldwork of this study between 2012 and 2013, the films enjoy patronage across age, sex, culture and social backgrounds. In the early years when these films were just beginning to be shown in Malawi in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the patronage was predominantly the young, comprising mostly of teenage boys. Now it is across all ages and sexes. The young, old, single as well as couples now frequent these commercial video homes to watch Nollywood films for entertainment. In the rural areas Nollywood films enjoy the monopoly of patronage where almost 100 per cent of film audiences claim to prefer the Nigerian films to those of Hollywood or Bollywood. In the rural areas, the old or young; married or single, men or women patronise the per per view video show houses in the nearest trading centres. Usually, on market days, couples trek to the market places which are strategically placed in a trading centre where there are many video show houses which cater for film lovers. In some trading centres, market days fall two days within a week while in some centres only once a week. (see Appendices 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

Okome (2007) shares a similar experience of the two sets of commercial video parlours in Nigeria's Lagos city: the affluent low density locations and the high density poor locations. Unlike their Lagos counterparts, the commercial video parlours are only installed in the high density poor locations in Malawi's urban centres. There are no public video parlours in the affluent locations of urban Malawi.

Personal Entertainment

A small number of viewers watch the films on their personal computers (laptops or desktops) in homes or in workplaces. A very small section of the viewers watch the videos via online accesses. There are several websites through which to access the films such as naijafilms.com, Nollywood.com, naijamovies.com and several others including YouTube. Some of these websites or links charge whilst many offer free access.

As the films are produced in English, it raises the issue of language as a concern in this study in relation to the rural audience majority of whom have no proficiency in this language. The following section discusses the implication of the English language to this category of audiences. The section further explores how the films remain relevant despite the perceived language limitation among such audiences.

LANGUAGE, TRANSLATION AND RELEVANCE OF VIDEOS TO MALAWIAN AUDIENCES

Language is a vehicle for communication and is embedded in the culture of the people. Since Nigeria and Malawi have different vernacular languages from each other, filmmakers use English to communicate to the audiences. However, being a

popular film culture as discussed earlier in section three of this chapter, a good number of viewers in Malawi, particularly from rural population do not read or speak English. This raises doubt about the effectiveness of the films to this category of audience. However, claims by most of the viewers who cannot read and speak English suggest otherwise. According to this study, non-English speaking participants are able to follow the films' storylines competently in the same way as their counterparts with fluency in English. Chapter six of the thesis indicates that cultural relevance is key to the non-English speaking viewers' competence in following the films. The fact that most Nollywood films are centred on story-telling which is a major component of folklore tradition, the narratives in them make sense to the local audiences who share the folklore cultural background, as discussed in section three of this chapter. In most scenes within a plot, actors convey a meaning to their audiences even if they do not express it verbally. Cultural similarities between the artists and the local audiences make such communion effective. For instance, body language, including the gestures and expressions uttered within the acting, appear familiar within the African traditional cultural context of communication. Hence viewers easily relate the gestures to the narratives in the films. The gestures in this case communicate familiar messages that enable them to interpret and understand the general narrative of the films even if they are not competent in English. This underlines the relevance of having many Nollywood films of the melodrama genre as gestures are linked to the stage performance of the origin of these productions:- Yoruba Stage performances. (see Ugochukwu, 2011; Okome, 2007; Okome, Haynes, 1998).

Ugochukwu (2009) conducted a study among non-English speaking French viewers who were exposed to Nollywood films for the first time. She established that these viewers were able to follow the films possibly owing to their African cultural heritage as evidence from one French-Congolese viewer “Africans feel at home because life is more or less the same whatever the country” (14). Katsuva (2003 cited) in Ugochukwu (2009:14) appears to corroborate the experience of the viewer cited above: “what attracts most Congolese to Nigerian films is that the type of language easily translates an African culture which is similar to Congolese culture in general and that the themes utilised in these video films are closely related and similar to the Congolese life style.” Chapter five of the thesis confirms this observation among Malawian audiences participating in this study. Ugochukwu (2013) study further suggests that for Nollywood enthusiasts, it is the elements of cultures that cut across to the audiences that make the films relevance to the African viewers other than the language through which the storylines are packaged. She argues that African audiences would still patronise the films and get the film narratives clear with or without dubbing or subtitling. Findings of this study confirm this experience in chapter six of the thesis in which the issue of identity is crucial in Nollywood viewership among Malawian film enthusiasts.

Secondly, most of the films are shown or viewed repeatedly on a single day running for weeks when it is a new release. Hence, the more the viewers watch the films the easier they come to understand the message contained in them and elements of non-verbal communication such as gestures of love, romance, anger, celebration, sorrow and violence. In this way, non-English speaking audiences do not need a translator

and language is never a barrier to them. McCall (2002) discusses similar observations during his encounter with local Nollywood viewers in Nigeria who could not speak and understand English.

Thirdly, as the mode of watching is communal especially in homes and commercial video houses, those with competence in the English language will always excitedly share the story lines with fellow viewers (regardless of their competence in English) in and outside the video show rooms. In the process, those who cannot understand English can easily capture the video narratives in context. Those sharing the stories of the films do so spontaneously and are not consciously translating to those who may not have understood the language being used in the films. Okome (2007) expresses similar observations following a study he carried out in two Nigerian communities of Niger Delta and Lagos. He states that one of the general traits of Nollywood film viewers irrespective of their mode of consumption is their tendency to share stories of the plots. The same applies to audiences in Malawi who do this for the fun of it and in the process makes it easy for the non-English speakers to understand the films much faster.

Nonetheless, there have been efforts to translate some films into the vernacular Chichewa language. Although the initiative is purely motivated by commercial interests, it nevertheless facilitates the easy consumption of film products among the Malawian local audiences.

According to the viewers' perspective, it appears Nollywood films are playing a role in changing the audiences' world view in some respects. Chapter eight and nine of

the thesis give an account of the evidence of this claim. Similar claims are also reported by Francois Werner regarding the social effects of the Brazilian telenovelas on the local Senegalese audiences. Werner (2006) posits that the films impact on the attitudes and behaviour of the members of Senegalese families who then could imitate the soap operas actors.

Every year for the past five years, Nollywood celebrities visit Malawi. For instance, the actor Rita Dominic visited Malawi in 2009 and another actor, Van Vicker, made a visit in 2012. Arguably, this underlines the extent to which Nollywood filmmakers place Malawi as a fast growing market for their films in Sub-Saharan Africa. As an endorsement of Nollywood's relevance to Malawian society, influential local newspapers and magazines run editorials on Nollywood. Nollywood actors are featured in the local magazines and tabloids. Malawi's weekly papers such as *Weekend Times*, *Malawi News*, *Weekend Nation* and *Nation on Sunday* publish some articles on Nollywood in their entertainment columns. One of these weeklies, *Weekend Times*, used to have a special column for Nollywood. Unfortunately, *Weekend Times* was closed in 2013.

CONCLUSION

As a contextual framework for this study, the chapter has presented the social, economic, political and cultural backgrounds of Malawi and Nigeria in perspective. As the study relates to Nollywood films and its impact on gender relations, some social and political contexts were essential for understanding and so lay the foundations for discussion throughout the thesis. Through necessity, the chapter has

presented some contextual issues regarding the emergence of Nollywood films in Nigeria and Malawi. The chapter has in particular looked at the film's reception in Malawi and its modes of consumption.

As I indicated earlier in the first section of this chapter, the study of Nollywood audiences in Malawi faces some challenges. There is no available literature on Nollywood films in Malawi and this makes the task difficult whenever contextual issues on the local scene for the purpose of scholarly approach is needed. Ironically, this situation accords me an opportunity to lay a claim regarding the relevance of my study: filling the gap in the context of Nollywood film studies, on one hand, and offering new knowledge on Nollywood and its potential to impact on gender relations in Malawi, on the other. Thus, my study explores the films' potential to change public perception of women against a background of male patriarchal attitudes which is evident in the way men relate to their female counterparts.

Despite Nollywood's shortfalls as pointed out by critics and highlighted elsewhere in this thesis, the study finds the film the most attractive video phenomenon among the local population in Malawi. There are reasons for this appeal of Nollywood films as demonstrated in chapters six to nine of the thesis. This observation is shared by Akpabio (2007: 91) who based his findings on Nollywood audiences in Lagos. He concludes that "audience members have a favourable attitude to Nigerian home video films in spite of the emphasis on negative themes," and he adds "perhaps, the success of Nollywood could be attributed to the ability of present day film makers to

emphasise contemporary realities which many Nigerians and Africans can relate to” (ibid: 90).

Thus, the popularity of Nollywood films necessitates this researcher to explore the possibility for the films to support the existing national, regional and continental initiatives for social change. Since the issue of gender relations remains contentious in African cultural communities, it makes this study relevant as it is the same cultural communities that are the primary audiences of this African popular film culture.

PART II

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This part will begin with a discussion on scholarly works relevant to the study in chapter three. As the study explores Nollywood's representation of women using interdisciplinary approach, the chapter analyses various contributions available on gender, discourse and conversational analysis and other feminist works, just to mention a few. Essentially, the chapter will attempt to answer the following questions or issues in respect to its account of the scholarship relevant to the study: what scholarship is there on Nollywood films? How does my study fit into this scholarship? How is my study distinctive from the current Nollywood scholarship? What is the gap in knowledge that this work addresses?

Likewise, in respect to the study's theoretical frameworks: continentalisation and Pan-Africanism, the chapter will give detailed discussion on these central theories and supporting theoretical tools. In this regard, the chapter will attempt to answer the following questions: on what theoretical ideas is my study hinged? What are the theoretical tools/ideas that I have employed to argue my case? Secondly, the part will discuss the methodology used to collect data and analyse it in chapter four. The

part will discuss how qualitative approach was critical in collecting data from the films and the focus groups. The chapter will discuss how the data was processed and how were the participants involved. The chapter will give an account of the challenges the study met in its life project at all stages of its execution.

As the study is hinged on two theoretical frameworks; continentalisation and pan-Africanism, the next discussion will open with an outline description of these two terms and concepts and their relevance to Nollywood. The chapter will introduce these two concepts and introduce the existing scholarship on them. The chapter will highlight that Pan-Africanism is a political ideology with full of flaws and has never been successful but remains the only option available for African continent and her sense of identity. The chapter will further highlight that continentalisation is a new concept which is not tried and tested but it has the potential drive Pan-Africanism to achieve its long term desired goals. The chapter will argue that Nollywood is at the centre of the two concepts as a vehicle to reach out to the continent's nations with a new breed of understanding, philosophy and culture that every African would call their own.

CONTINENTALISATION AND PAN-AFRICANISM AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO NOLLYWOOD

Omoniyi (2014:17-18) defines continentalisation as “a form of bottom-up globalisation in Africa controlled by localised social agents within the continent in contrast to top-down globalisation that is driven by the powerful, often external agents”. Omoniyi cites film industries as examples of such localised agents of

continentalisation whilst symbolising globalisation by the global agents such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and Hollywood. As pointed out by Omoniyi, this study uses Nollywood as an agent of continentalisation in a sense that it facilitates cultural and capital flow across the national borders in Africa. In the case of Malawi, arguably Nollywood facilitates continentalisation in showcasing the Nigerian cultures through its films. In terms of economic flow, the films do facilitate the cash flow between Malawi and Nigeria through the sales of the films. In this way, the country contributes to the industry's growth on one hand, and, on the other hand, the industry does generate a range of merchandise activities that contribute to the economy of Malawi. Such merchandising activities are carried out through film sales and rental, and commercial video parlours. Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide (see McCall, 2007). It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to unify and uplift people of African descendant (Frick, et al., 2006). Pan-Africanism is a political ideology and it has been manifested in various ways for decades since the colonial period. Continentalisation is a social, cultural and economic concept that is new and remains untested. Continentalisation in some sense is achieving something that Pan-Africanism has had difficulties achieving, blunting the edge difference and integrating the continent through sharing culture (Omoniyi, Personal Communication: 2015).

ORGANISATION OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter is organised as follows: there are three sections; the literature review, theoretical framework and a discussion of supporting theories that are essential in interpreting female representation in Nollywood films. The literature review is further divided into two sub-sections. Sub-section one discusses scholarly works on Nollywood films. For the purpose of this study, time and space, I limit the discussion to the scholarly debate on the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. I further present previous studies of reception or audiences' viewing experiences of Nollywood films based on the representative sample population in Africa, Europe and America.

The second section of the chapter presents and discusses the theoretical framework of the study. Continentalisation and Pan-Africanism are the key theoretical frameworks on which the study hinges. Various manifestations of Pan-Africanism and continentalisation are highlighted under this section. The section is further divided into two sub-sections. As stated earlier on, sub-section one discusses Pan-Africanism and Continentalisation in detail. Sub-section two introduces and discusses the theoretical tools or ideas that the study employs to explain or interrogate and interpret audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films. Thus, among other ideas, the sub-section discusses contestations on the concept of African gender as discussed by several African feminist/-gender scholars. It further discusses cultural and discourse analysis theories and highlights their relevance to the central theoretical frame of continentalisation and Pan-Africanism.

In particular, the chapter introduces dialogue analysis as a semiotic theory that helps in the interpretation of the case study films and audiences' responses.

Section three will discuss various theories that are critical in studying female representation in Nollywood films. The section will discuss various feminist, cultural, conversational, discourse and dialogic theories that will be used in interpreting and analysing female representation in films and in audiences' responses.

SECTION ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

SCHOLARSHIP ON NOLLYWOOD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO FEMALE REPRESENTATION

Scholarly debate on female representation in Nollywood films

There is much scholarly debate on female representation in Nollywood films. Some argue that the films adopt Western culture and as such they do not represent African woman, as observed by Arachie (2010: 13): "Nollywood industry is becoming more Americanised in portraying their women similar to how women are portrayed in the US". Others claim that Nollywood films present an exaggerated representation of the Nigerian or African woman (Ukata, 2010).

One of the areas where the films portrayal of women is under question is in evangelical videos. Evangelical films or movies have different categories but are all

centred on propagating Christian faith using fictitious or real storylines as testimonies to woo the viewers. In her examination of the role of women in Nollywood's evangelical films, Okuyade (2011) concludes that female voices in most of these films are unequivocally absent. She observes that although there is more female presence in the evangelical films than male, their role or influence in the films remains marginal. Based on her analysis of two gospel films produced by Helen Ukpabio titled *Highway to the Grave* (2000) and *End of the Wicked* (1999), Okuyade contends that women in the Nollywood gospel films are used as objects to celebrate the power of patriarchy in the Christian God. Thus she claims women's roles in such films is reduced to evangelical merchandising: "women are either agents of the sea-cum demonised world, whom God must destroy to demonstrate his supremacy and power over the universe, or rescuers of men from the grip of powerful spirits or occult forces," (Ibid:13).

In her analysis of the influence of the black American female representation on Nollywood films and music videos, Arachie (2010) is of the view that women are negatively represented in the Nollywood films, a phenomenon which she claims is a reflection of how black women are portrayed in the Black American entertainment industry. Using textual analysis of the two Nollywood films *Beautiful Faces* (2004) and *Love Games* (2008), Arachie argues that women are negatively portrayed as objects of sex and violence. She concludes that women in most Nollywood films are depicted as victims of violence emanating from men. In the same vein, she continues, women are showcased as sexual objects whose role is to satisfy men's

sexual needs and at the same time to subject themselves to men's sexual exploitation through their revealing attires that drive men to use them.

In her interrogation of female representation in five Nollywood videos: *I Was Wrong* (2004), *The Tyrant* (2003), *Masterstroke* (2004), *Omata Women* (2003) and *More Than a Woman* (2005), Ukata (2010) holds the opinion that the films portray the conflicting roles of women. She argues that women are depicted as housewives, mothers and cooks on one hand whilst on the other hand, they are depicted as lawyers, teachers, political leaders and religious leaders. Ukata makes a case for a binary female representation in Nollywood films; traditional women versus urban women, good women versus bad women, urban versus rural women. She explains such binaries as being analogous to gender constructs that often lead to stereotypes in the roles women play or are expected to play in society. For instance, a traditional woman is expected to be loyal, submissive, child-bearing, a mother and a committed housewife. Likewise, an urban or modernised woman is expected to be a career woman, or business woman, aggressive, critical and mostly one who does not attach much value to family life.

Ukata blames the perceived misrepresentation of women in Nollywood films on a male dominated film industry which, she argues, puts patriarchy and commercial interests first at the expense of women. She remarks:

The portrayal of women in most Nigerian videos is reported to be generally at variance with how real Nigerian women are in Nigerian society. There are many types of women, good and bad in any society but the videos mostly feed off the negative stereotypes that reduce women to be the personifications of evil. One can say

that it does not matter how representations are done or mediated, what matters is whether filmmakers are able to provide their patrons with story lines that entertain and inspire the public to patronise the films. The concern here is the increasing profit margins for the industry. (Ukata, 2010: 207)

She argues that the above depiction of women partly explains how, in order to maintain their audiences, the films portray their characters in ways that align with the so-called traditional gendered roles of men as subjects and women as objects of the stories which eventually translates into the one-dimensional description of women.

Based on their assessment of two Nollywood films *Ife* (2012) and *Mr and Mrs* (2012), Adewoye et al. (2014) contend that women are generally portrayed as sex objects and objects of erotic gaze for men. In these films, women are shown as “the weaker sex” (11). The domestic women are portrayed as “the wicked mother-in-law” while the working class women are depicted as “insubordinate wives” and “uncaring mothers” (ibid: 11). Adewoye claims that the stereotypical representations of women in the films fit into and can reinforce widely held social beliefs and gender role expectations of women in the larger Nigerian socio-cultural environment.

In her analysis of the reaction of women feminist critics to Nollywood films in the context of Nigerian society, Adeleye-Fayemi (2012), states that there is a conflicting image of women in the films. She observes women are portrayed as either “powerful and dangerous” or “long-suffering” (12). She claims that “women are shown not just as society perceives them, but as society expects them to be” Adeleye-Fayemi in Bryce (2012:12). Abbah in Bryce (2012:76) supports Adele-

Fayemi's view that women are presented as wicked, manipulative, loose in morals, diabolic, and inferior to men.

Azeez (2010) further supports Adeleye-Fayemi's view and claims that Nollywood films portray and position Nigerian women stereotypically and negatively. She argues that the films position women at the bottom of the power hierarchy in a way that reinforces their domination and suppression. She continues that the "portrayal of women in Nigerian films does not only limit representations of women to passive and subordinate housewives, but also portrays them as evil people, who are wicked, vindictive and unfaithful" (201).

In her essay on examining the role of women in evangelical films in Nollywood, Okuyade (2011) suggests a conflicting image of women in the films. Basing his analysis on women's representation in the two Nollywood films *Highway to the Grave* and *End of the Wicked*, he maintains that the films make a case clear that women are a "very powerful tool for proselytizing" (Okuyade, 2011:1). However, at the same time he intimates that they are also portrayed as agents of destruction. He attests that the films depict women as important figures in society but who are subjected to the temptation of evil spirits. He sums up:

Female characters are very important in the films because the stories are woven around them. In both films, women are crucial to the evangelical message, particularly insofar as they have the capacity to rescue their family from the clutches of the devil. They are the ones who lead their men to church, yet their portrayal presents certain homogeneity of character that can be attributed to a basic reductiveness in man's notion of women. Women are not discussed in these films in any serious dialectical manner. (Okuyade, 2011:12)

Scholars have observed that violence against women is arguably one of the dominant themes in many Nollywood films. Various studies of these films reveal that the films depict many issues of sexual harassment perpetuated by male characters against female characters (see Akpabio, 2009). Kur et. al. (2011) argues that women characters are portrayed as objects of sexual and physical harassment in the films. They contend that most films portray men as victims of women's immorality. They observe that female characters are often presented seducing male characters and are associated with evil acts that stereotype women as witches, uneducated and unprofessional.

Despite the above discussion of female representation, there is insufficient scholarship that gives an account of viewers' or audiences' interpretation of female representation in Nollywood films. A good number of scholars have explored female representation based on their own interpretation. Some scholars have given an analysis of female representation based on the interpretation of all-female audiences as respondents. However, there is a dearth of scholarship regarding the reaction of a group (s) of a mixture of male and female Nollywood to female representation in the videos. As the case study films used in this study are a fair representation of the videos' portrayal of Nollywood, my present work therefore fills this gap in the literature by presenting a critique of female presentation in Nollywood films from the perspective of both male and female audiences' respondents. It can be claimed that audiences' reaction to film and its subsequent social and psychological effect is arguably a key to appreciate its relevance to the viewers and society in general. Thus, the responses of the participating viewers are relevant in ascertaining the

extent to which female representation has had any social effect to the audiences in relation to their perception of women in general.

Scholarship on Nollywood reception and its relevance to the interpretation of audiences' response to female representation in the films

There is evidence of audience or reception studies on Nollywood films that have been conducted in and outside of Nigeria in recent years. Reception studies on Nigerian audiences have helped to understand how the local viewers make meaning from their own films, which, arguably, showcases their own dominant local cultures. McCall (2002) engaged an Igbo native doctor as his key respondent in a village in southeast Nigeria where the doctor and his family discussed and interpreted the film *Blood Money* (1996). According to McCall, the native doctor, Chief Ink, a merchant and retired teacher, had talents that include training in the practice of divination, herbal pharmacology, and knowledge of a broad spectrum of indigenous rituals and philosophies (McCall, 2002). McCall asked Chief Ink to expound the causes of madness or aberrant behaviour among some individuals in the doctor's own community.

The chief responded to McCall's inquiry using the film *Blood Money*. Going scene by scene, the respondent narrated the story and interpreted it based on his cultural context. McCall relates the cultural and social narrative of *Blood Money*, as interpreted by Chief Ink, to the localised or contextualised capitalism in the worldview of the doctor. According to McCall, on one hand, the film represents practical capitalism in the African sense as signified by the *blood* narrative in

traditional belief and perception. On the other hand, it represents the Western sense of capitalism through the narrative of *money*. Hence, the film's interpretation, according to McCall, is a case in point of the new form of capitalism in the African social-cultural context. He thus gives an account of his observation:

I was struck by the apt attention that young and old gave to the unfolding story. Because this domestic scene is so distinct from that of urban theatres, it is evident that any discussion of "African cinema" that does not consider the social context of viewing is inadequate. While these viewers are residents in a rural village, they do not live in a discrete "rural culture". Virtually all of them, even as children, live some of their lives in the cities. They consume products of the world market. They participate in the ancestor's rituals, but also in rituals of the workplace and the nation. (McCall, 2002:91)

The above quote suggests that modern African society, as could be represented in Nollywood films, is slowly turning to be a global society with aspects of globalisation becoming inevitable. This would therefore imply that the representation of women in the films reflects the change in real life where women are not as traditional as one would expect them in the ideal African sense. For the purpose of this study, I would argue that Nollywood could define the representation that fairly represents African societies overall without necessarily being influenced by the 'Western' prescribed representation of womanhood.

Akpabio (2007) conducted an audience study covering a population of around seven million residents of Nigeria's Lagos State (Nigeria's National Population Data Sheet, 1991-2010). The study employed 1,440 participants. The findings suggest that respondents have a largely favourable attitude to Nollywood films. This, Akpabio observes, is despite the fact that respondents expressed the view that there

is too much emphasis on what they perceived as negative themes such as sex, violence, prostitution, sibling rivalry, evils of polygamy and devilish spiritualism (2007). Akpabio claims that the films are a reflection of society in general. He argues that “the fetish alluded to here and other cues are realities in the Nigerian society and thus, readily connect with the people. The rural and urban settings in which the films are shot and the various characters as well as themes and storylines are what the average Nigerian can easily identify with” (ibid: 98).

Okome (2007) investigated the sites of audience consumption around Lagos in Nigeria. He identified two sites through which audiences consume Nollywood films which are the *video parlour* and *street corner sites*. Video parlour consumption involves watching the films either in designated video show rooms or venues that charge fee per view. It further involves the designated venues in homes or public places where people could watch free such as in extended family households or in business premises where clients or patroness are entertained such as in restaurants, bars and bank halls. Street corner consumption involves watching the films informally from the corners or windows of the video shops or business premises. Usually, this sort of consumption is common in market places and in shops which rent out or sell the videos and they play latest movies on their shop screens to woo potential customers to buy the films. In the process, the passersby take note of this and stay around watching. Some deliberately stick around and it becomes habitual for them.

Okome notes that each of the mentioned site presents the absence of the other. His findings suggest bold and obvious similarities between the audiences of the video parlour and that of the street corner. He claims that “perhaps, the most obvious is that they are both defined by a strong desire by those left out of the public narrative of life in Nigeria to be part of the city and of the nation” (ibid: 17). Okome observes that the audiences, whether belonging to the street corner or the video parlour, are denied access as part of the hegemonic media narrative put forward by the state, which, he claims, provides a fertile ground for them to turn to the video. However, he notes that the only difference between these two consuming habits is the entry fees charged. He states that unlike their counterparts in a video parlour, street corner audiences are not subjected to entry fees to watch the film but they are unable to influence what is being screened.

With the technological revolution, it has become easy for most African viewers to access Nollywood films via digital satellite television channels. Some viewers have access to watch free-to-air-television channels which contain special channels that feature Nollywood films (see Chapters Two and Three). Other viewers access the films via the pay-per-view digital commercial channel-DSTV Multichoice Africa which contains a special channel for Nollywood films: - Africa Magic. In a recent study, Ekwuazi (2014) researched the reception of DSTV/ Multichoice Africa Magic channels among Nollywood audiences of Nigeria. Multichoice Africa Magic channel is exclusively dedicated to Nollywood films. The study was carried out in Nigeria’s three Nollywood market/audience sites: Kano (Hausa), Onitsha/Aba (Igbo) and

Idumota/ Lagos (Yoruba). The findings indicate Nollywood as the source of the channel's popularity among its audiences. As the channel exclusively screens Nollywood films, it therefore suggests that Nollywood is the most watched film among Nigerian audiences.

Elsewhere in Africa, away from West Africa, audience and reception studies involving Nollywood viewers have been carried out elsewhere in the continent. For example, several recent studies have been conducted in the Eastern African nations of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Waliaula (2014) explores the distinctively heuristic approach to Nollywood films using a Bukusu-speaking audience community in Chwele Market, in West Kenya. Findings of this study indicate that the audiences' reaction to the films can be read as the adaptation of the reception experience that is contextualised within the framework of an oral performance. He explored the use of various formal characteristics of oral performance such as the use of symbolism, imagery, irony and hyperbole during the screening of the film *Snake Girl 2*. He argues that such stylistic features are appropriated from the visual and narrative form of the film and reconstructed in a way that creates an exchange between their reception stories. Dominica (2014) assesses the popularity of Nollywood film among its audiences in Uganda. He concludes that Nollywood films remain favourite among the audiences in Uganda especially those from low income brackets. He claims that the audiences appropriated and 'owned' Nollywood enough to challenge it to get better to ensure continued adherence to it (1). He notes that, for this to be possible, Video jockeys (VJs) appropriate and rewrite the films as they simultaneously

translate them into local languages for the benefit of non-English speaking audiences.

Reception or audience studies have also been conducted outside of Africa where Nollywood films are watched, albeit, on a small scale. Esan (2008) carried out an audience study based on a sample of United Kingdom based Nollywood respondents in South and East London. Her findings suggest the extent to which the social context of audiences shapes their reception of Nollywood films. Her study revealed a multiplicity of factors that motivate viewers to patronise Nollywood films. Apart from viewing films as a leisure activity, she observes that audiences found the films' storylines acted as a link to their cultural heritage. She states that viewers learned from the storylines, as is typical with traditional story telling. Her findings further reveal that audiences learn contemporary life skills. Significantly, her study also identified that audiences use Nollywood films as a platform for socialising with others. She thus observes that

Nollywood was a medium for discussing current affairs both by the subjects it covered and the pattern of viewing that it tends to generate in certain quarters. As one respondent explained, Nollywood facilitates social interaction. Though she was very busy and hardly had the time to watch on her own, she was still in the habit of renting films in order to have something to entertain her guests with and to keep up with new releases. (Esan, 2008:12)

Esan concludes that her findings suggest that communal viewing of Nollywood films in diasporic communities arguably recreates the feeling of homeland experiences among the audiences.

In a study among a Nigerian Yoruba community in London, Bello (2010) found that the films have had cultural influence on the lives of the diasporic community. Watching the films was a way of relieving nostalgic feelings which made respondents feel at home while away from their homeland. Thus, this suggests that Nollywood films give the Nigerian audiences a sense of belonging. Some of the participants commented that they were able to relate to cultural aspects of the films such as the actors' dress, hairstyles, verbal expressions and traditional costumes. Bello states that this gave them a feeling of being at home and he suggests that the films' cultural influence could also impact on other Nollywood audiences of Nigerian descent.

In another European study, Ugochukwu (2009) investigated the reception and impact of Nollywood films among non-English speaking Nollywood film viewers based in France. They were all fluent in French. The findings of her study revealed that despite the lack of English among most respondents, audiences still enjoyed watching the films. The films received enough attention among the French speaking households or groups with Nigerian or African connections. She indicates that some respondents found the language used to communicate the film, thus English, a valuable learning tool. According to Ugochukwu, respondents claimed that the films perform an educational function: vice is punished and virtue rewarded. However, she did note variances in respondents' positions: some asserting that films taught a moral lesson while others disagreed. In her final analysis, Ugochukwu concludes that all viewers involved in the study agreed that the films had a lot to teach: language, culture and morality.

As mentioned in chapter two, basing her investigations on the role or impact of language competence among non-English speakers watching English Nollywood films, Ugochukwu (2013) conducted a further audience study involving French speaking respondents who were exposed to the films for the first time. She established that these viewers were able to follow the films possibly owing to their African cultural heritage as described by one French-Congolese viewer: “Africans feel at home because life is more or less the same whatever the country” (14). In another study, further findings appear to corroborate on this experience: “what attracts most Congolese to Nigerian films is that the type of language easily translates an African culture which is similar to Congolese culture in general and that the themes utilised in these video films are closely related and similar to the Congolese lifestyle” (Katsuva, 2003:92 cited in Ugochukwu, 2013:3). The comments regarding Nollywood’s cultural relevance as expounded by the above Congolese respondent are substantiated by one of the Malawian respondents into this present study as presented earlier in extract in chapter two, section 5.2 of the thesis.

In addition to studying European audiences, a number of scholars have considered Nollywood film audiences in North American. Shivers (2010) researched on the mode of consumption of Nollywood films in the African diaspora communities of the United States. He focused his study on three major groups of a diasporic community of African descendant in the New York Metropolitan area. His respondents were selected among African-Americans, Caribbean migrants and African migrants. He noted that the African diasporic members involved in the study interact with each other through the consumption of Nollywood films. He claims that

they articulate an intricate and layered understanding of each other, as well as their group's meaning of blackness. Shivers, therefore, claims Nollywood consumption in this community was marked by ethnicity, gender and class. He states that his findings demonstrate that most respondents watched the films in private spaces with the same ethnic groups. His findings further show that other respondents admitted that same sex consumption was encouraged more than a mixed audience. However, I would fault the same sex consumption as a one sided approach to audience research. It can thus be contested that same sex consumption does not offer a fair representation of the reality of audiences' social relations. In the context of this study, same sex consumption would defeat the notion of establishing the status of gendered social relations among the viewers.

There is a limited body of literature on female audiences' interpretation of their fellow women in the films. Azeez (2010) investigated how Nigerians, particularly women, evaluate the meanings of female representation in Nollywood film. The findings suggest that there is a marked difference in the ways women and men interpret the meanings incorporated in the portrayal of women in the films. The study further highlights differences in the way women from different educational backgrounds perceive the representations of women in Nollywood films.

Arguably, closer to the approach of this present study, some earlier research work suggests attempts by scholars to examine the social impact of Nollywood films on audiences. The impact of women's portrayal on women viewers is one such critical research area that remains to be addressed in this new scholarship. Okunna (1996)

examined the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. He contends that the image of women in these films has been misrepresented. He thus intimates that this has the potential to negatively influence society's perception of women. He notes that although most women respondents had misgivings in the way the film portrays other women, they continued watching and enjoyed the films. Okunna suggests that the women's actions were a result of their conviction that the films are, to a large extent, unrealistic. However, the scholarship discussed in this chapter and elsewhere does not make any attempt to assess the films' impact on the non-Nigerian local audiences in terms of the social relations between male and female members of the societies. Furthermore, there is no available scholarship on Malawian audiences' engagement with Nollywood films nor has any research been carried out interrogating female representation in the Nollywood films by Nollywood audiences let alone non-Nigerian audiences, in this case, Malawian audiences. This is where my study contributes new knowledge in this field. My study gives an account by way of analysing audiences' reaction to female representation in Nollywood films. Both male and female audiences were involved in this study (see chapters one, two and four). The study investigates the impact of Nollywood films on audiences' perception of gender and power relations between male and female members of society. The study makes an attempt to delimit the gender relations in respect of Africa's cultural diversity. For this to happen, the study employs continentalisation and Pan-Africanism as theoretical concepts on which to hinge audiences' interpretation of female representation in African film-Nollywood film. The

following section therefore introduces, presents and discusses continentalisation and Pan-Africanism as the study's conceptual and ideological frameworks respectively.

SECTION TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CONTINENTALISATION AND PAN-AFRICANISM

Continentalisation as a conceptual framework

It can be argued that cultural flow is necessary for change in society. Globalisation theory has often been used to explain the flow of culture from one society to another (Tomlinson, 1999). Scholars have demonstrated how cultural flow from the West has overshadowed the indigenous cultures of the recipient cultures of the developing world. Africa is a case in point of such recipient societies (Amadiume, 2005; Barker, 1999). Christianity, Islam and colonialism are deemed to be the forces behind the flow of culture between the North and South (Kisiang'ani, 2004). Cultural and social theorists agree that the media has been an effective tool in the North-South cultural flow (Fairclough, 2006) and there are claims that television or film is a key agent of this North-South cultural flow (Barker, 1999). Arguably, the North-South cultural flow has resulted in the domination of Western cultures over the hosting indigenous cultures.

However, the North-South movement of cultures has had mixed responses among recipient societies. On one hand, some African societies have adopted it as a necessary intervention in their economic and social dilemmas. On the other hand, others have decried it as a neo-colonial agenda aimed at promoting Western ideals at the expense of other cultures (Amadiume, 2005; Oyewumi, 2005). In relation to this

study, gender is one such ideal that Western culture appears to have come into conflict with the cultures of the South. There are conflicting interpretations, expectations and implications regarding the concept of gender and sex roles that exist in Western cultures and particularly, in African cultures (Nnaemeka, 2003).

With the advent of Nollywood as the dominant film industry in Africa, it has become necessary to assess the impact of Nollywood films on local audiences across the continent. As Nollywood films emanate from Nigeria, it is expected that they would present dominant Nigerian cultures to their audiences elsewhere in the continent and, in the process, integrate into the local cultures where the films are watched across Africa. Hence, the films' impact on the recipient society could form the basis for tagging Nollywood as an agent of Pan-African cultural flow. This is what proponents of the movement term 'Continentalisation' (Omoniyi, 2014b:18).

Despite shared features in the cultures of African communities, it is common knowledge that differences exist among them. Thus, advocates of the South-South cultural flow would argue that Nollywood is strategically positioned as an agent of this movement (Ibid). Just as Western films are regarded as agents of global culture on face value, likewise, this study demonstrates how Nollywood is an agent of the intra-continental cultural flow and thus is a form of continentalisation.

This study extends the scholarship on Nollywood by using continentalisation as a conceptual framework to explain Pan-African intra-cultural exchange. This study has been inspired by Marston et al. (2007) who theorise Nollywood as an agent of globalisation.

However, the above group of authors are arguably selective in their description of what constitutes Nollywood as a global phenomenon. Marston and co-authors apparently present Nollywood as an imitative film culture of the dominant Hollywood and Bollywood. It can be contested that they choose to highlight only those aspects that make the case for Nollywood as a global representation whilst at the same time silencing anything local associated with it. There is little or no attempt to present Nollywood's local aspect that would make a case for a distinct local spatiality to the global phenomenon.

Several scholars explain how Nollywood films have penetrated the European and American film audiences (see Haynes, 2010; Ugochukwu, 2009). They have presented compelling individual accounts of how Nollywood films are consumed and interpreted by the audiences in Europe, North America and Asia. However, their work falls short of demonstrating the extent to which these films have impacted on such global audiences other than entertainment. However, lately, there has been an attempt to theorise Nollywood beyond social pleasure or as a mere entertainment phenomenon. Omoniyi (2014b) leads the way in this regard. He proposes continentalisation is a South-South and transnational phenomenon rather than a global and transcontinental phenomenon.

Based on the observation of the above highlighted scholarship among several on Nollywood, this study therefore builds on Omoniyi's proposition of continentalisation. He argues that continentalisation is an alternative to globalisation

and he further describes it as a bottom-up approach among African nations. This study investigates the South-South intra-cultural flow that occurs through the distribution of Nollywood films. My present work, therefore, examines the potential of Nollywood as a vehicle for the resurgence of the Pan-Africanist culture in the realm of gender relations and discourse in present-day African multi-cultural societies (Mazrui, 2005). This scholarship further examines how Nollywood films have the potential to bring about social changes among its audiences elsewhere in Africa: - the Malawian audiences are a case in point. Furthermore, gender relations that are manifested through power balances or imbalances between men and women in society are an area that would demonstrate the extent to which these films could be considered as a potential agent of social change.

Pan-Africanism as an ideological framework

According to Campbell (1996), Pan-Africanism developed among slaves who created a vision of the unity of the struggles of the African people at home and abroad. He further states that it was the totality of the system of oppression which forced the Africans to create a vision of the world which was larger than the individual nation or ethnic group from which the slaves were captured. For the purpose of this study, the role of women was equally critical at the onset of the Pan-African movement as Campbell claims that “African women were at the forefront of the resistance to slavery by teaching the principal lessons of resistance and dignity” (1996:84-85).

As a background to Pan-Africanism, seven Pan-African meetings took place between 1900s and the 1990s. The meetings provided a forum for African leaders to discuss social, political and economic challenges facing African people and their descendants on the continent and elsewhere in the world. At present, the movement, in its various manifestations, faces the challenges of civil war, hunger, political instability, Aids, neo-colonialism, economic exploitation and cultural erosion. Proponents of the Pan-African movement have blamed forces of globalisation such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation for the continent's failure to register progress in socio-economic welfare for her people (Ezeonu, 2013). Advocates of Pan-Africanism cite the West's imposition of the Structural Adjustment Programs as a case in point of the failing theories of globalisation in Africa (ibid).

In recent decades scholars and various social, political and religious commentators in favour of the movement have conceptualised Pan-Africanism to project their ideological interest (Ake, 1965; Campbell, 1988; 1996; Nantambu, 1998). However, ideological differences on what this movement should stand for largely contributed to its ineffectiveness (see Sigmund, 1963). For instance, among several theorists, Contee (1972:95) regards "the Pan-Africanism movement as an aid to the promotion of national self-determination among Africans under African leadership for the benefit of Africans themselves". Esedeke (1977:67) suggests that "Pan-Africanism is a political and cultural phenomenon which regards Africa, Africans and their

descendants abroad as a unit". Chrisman (1973:2) appears more detailed and inclusive in his theorising of Pan-Africanism. He asserts that

The Pan-African vision has its basic premise that we people of African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community by virtue of our origin in Africa and our common racial, social and economic oppression. It further maintains that political, economic, and cultural unity is essential among all Africans, to bring about effective action for the liberation and progress of the African peoples and nations.

However, some scholars fault the definition expounded by fellow Pan-Africanists. They argue that many definitions advanced by Pan-Africanist scholars have been analysed within a Eurocentric perspective. Nantambu (1998) asserts that the historical struggle of African people has been analysed in the context of the West. He claims that this has led to rendering the continent "dysfunctional, ahistorical, and divisive" (561). He therefore suggests the Afrocentric approach to conceptualising and defining Pan-Africanism. He coins the term 'Pan-African Nationalism' and not 'Pan-Africanism'. He argues that Pan-African Nationalism embraces all people or nations of Africa and those of African descents as one nation and forming a common front to confront their problems. Nantambu maintains that in this way the struggle of African peoples can be analysed from its proper historical, unifying and holistic perspective.

However, other scholars disagree with the wholesale association of Pan-Africanism with racialism. They argue that Pan-Africanism should be based on fighting the West's economic exploitation that was manifested through slavery and colonialism. He further claims that in modern times, Africans wherever they are, continue facing

other new forms of subjugation in the face of capitalistic activities namely on the labour and consumer market. Nantambu (1998) asserts that European slavery was founded on the making and accumulation of profit. He thus states that “economics was the primary motive behind slavery; racial overtones were secondary” (565). Other scholars such as Williams (1961) support Nantambu’s position. Williams (1961) asserts that the primary motive of the Western settlers in Africa was economical and not racial and thus that slavery was based on economic ends and not racial ones. William echoes Nantambu’s position that Pan-Africanism is a force aimed at countering the West’s economic and social dominance of Africans and their resources. Based on Nantambu’s and Williams’ position, for the purpose of this study, I therefore use pan-Africanism as a cultural and political theory, force or phenomenon to deconstruct the West’s ideological and cultural domination over Africa.

This study therefore looks at Pan-Africanism as a reaction to the dominance of Western cultures that have migrated to the continent via forces of globalisation. As a political ideology, Pan-Africanism is used to analyse the extent to which ideas, politics and other socio-economic products within the continent can flow within Africa for the best of Africa that could form a common continental identity. Hence, in this study Nollywood is proposed as a vehicle to facilitate this process which involves other aspects of Pan-Africanism that include culture, products, trade, ideas and knowledge. This is where Omoniyi’s concept of continentalisation comes in to complement Pan-Africanism. The former offers an alternative theory to globalisation in the context of Africa’s cultural products and ideas. The latter counters Western

imposed political ideologies. Arguably, this could lead to a common ideological understanding that is common across the continent. The following discussion therefore presents attributes or features of Pan-Africanist products as a case in point. This helps to put into perspective the relevance of the two conceptual frameworks in the discussion of this thesis. This study suggests such examples as a manifestation of the continentalisation movement that would be effectively facilitated by Nollywood films that are being watched across African cultures.

HOW IS CONTINENTALISATION AND PAN-AFRICANISM BEING MANIFESTED IN THE POST-COLONIAL AFRICA?

Political developments as manifestation of Pan-Africanism

Arguably, between 1800s and 1940s, the consciousness of a common African destiny was a notion propagated by the continent's elite and its associate diasporic community (Ake, 1965). Ake contends that the broad African perspective in terms of political, social and economic exploitation by the European settlers tended to be a monopoly of top-level leadership. However, from 1950s onwards, Africa has seen the proliferation of organisations and institutions which have broadened the scope of social communication between her people (ibid). Since then, social and political consciousness has permeated the lower strata of African society. The masses have become sensitive enough to events in the continent to cause anxiety to leaders whose performances are constantly compared. Hence, events in one part of the continent tend to echo in another. Omoniyi (2014:17) sums up his observation on efforts by African communities to respond to issues affecting their society in uniformity:

Pan-Africanism had responded to colonialism through resistance discourses in the mid-20th Century and spread across Africa. In the post-colony, the trans-border nature of a pan-African political tradition is evident in the wake of copycat military coup d'états that gripped the continent. The fact that the continent also responded to democracy in much the same manner is confirmation that the continent could be subject to a singular process of transformation.

The response to continental movements which defined and shaped African destiny had been enormous and forward moving. For instance, since Ghana gained its independence from the British in 1953, several countries followed suit. Most Southern African states like Malawi and Zambia gained their independence in the 1960s. At the same time, there was a crop of mutinies across Africa centred on the common theme of Africanisation. Military leadership reacted as a result of discontent over the working conditions in the army. When the military took over the Togo government in a *coup d'état* over poor service conditions of the army, there was a reaction from their Liberian counterparts. Colonel David Thompson, the leader of the abortive *coup d'état* in Liberia, was reported to have argued that there was no reason why 5,000 Liberian soldiers could not overthrow a government if only 250 Togolese counterparts managed to do so (Ake, 1965:532).

The new African leadership that took over from colonial administrators faced an uphill task to impress the expectant masses. This therefore created a potentially explosive atmosphere, and in response to this, the new leaders opted for autocratic leadership. They justified their position by arguing that “a minimum of political stability could not in such circumstances be guaranteed without forceful leadership” (Ake, 1965:537). Thus, authoritarianism became a common style adopted by the

pioneer African presidents to counter opposition pressures. This gave rise to single party politics in most African states. Likewise, when some African states adopted multiparty politics following pressure from the masses, the response from the neighbouring citizens was unprecedented. For instance, when Zambia adopted a multiparty government following the 1991 elections that saw Kenneth Kaunda lose to Fredrick Chiluba, their Malawian neighbours responded to this development by a series of mass protests and, at times violent, strikes. This forced the founding president Kamuzu Banda to call for a referendum that ushered in multiparty politics in 1993.

The political trends across Africa since the colonial period to the present time serve to provide an understanding of the growing uniformity of policies and institutions in the continent. With the advent of social media and other aspects of globalisation, one could argue the political landscape in Africa can change even without Pan-Africanist initiatives. But, as demonstrated, Pan-Africanism reinforces the desired changes in the continent by exposing African people more to one another which provides fora to share experiences of their common problems. Ake (1965: 541-542) notes that:

By emphasizing the uniqueness of Africa's experience and culture, Pan-Africanism emboldens African leaders to adopt solutions, unorthodox by Western standards, but required by Africa's difficult circumstances. No one reading the policy statements of African governments can fail to notice the recurrence of the same clichés and the fact that every rationalisation usually begins with the uniqueness of the African society. Again, while it is contemptible to copy Western institutions, it is quite respectable to copy those of other African governments, and the imitator has an

added confidence of benefitting from an experience that is directly relevant to his.

Arguably, the African experience, relevant across the continent's nations, calls the attention to the intra-continental flow of ideas, knowledge, skills and philosophies that respond well to the local needs. This resonates with the concept of locality as opposed to globality. Hence, it can be argued that continentalisation is an alternative to globalisation as African nations seek local solutions to confront their local political, economic and social problems without having to rely on inter-continental intervention. Nollywood could therefore facilitate this local movement of ideas that would form a homogeneous African approach or ideology to confront problems particular to Africa in the spirit Pan-Africanism was designed to achieve. Such a movement is what this study is adopting as continentalisation. The next discussion therefore cites integration as one of the products or manifestations of continentalisation.

Integration as a manifestation of Continentalisation

Proponents of integration contend that it promotes socio-economic and political liberalisation by bringing together professional and private associations into cross border interest groups (Campbell, 1996). They argue that such groups are ready to defend themselves whenever their rights and privileges are under threat (ibid). In recent times, interest groups across the continent have come together to exchange ideas and discuss common problems. Associations or unions like African trade unions, lawyers, journalists, educators, sports organisations, and authors are evidence of this claim. It is expected that by exploiting continental support, a

particular national association should be able to obtain a more respectful treatment from its government. Some national groupings or associations have demonstrated their ability to defend their counterparts in other countries all over the continent. There are several cases in point to demonstrate such initiatives within the nation states since the onset of Africa's political independence from the colonial governments. For instance, when Liberia's Attorney General Abayomi Cassel was dismissed from his position in 1961, the Nigerian branch of the International Commission of Jurists demanded his reinstatement (Ake, 1965). Cassel presented a paper that was critical of Liberia's Judiciary at a Conference held in Nigeria. This is just one of several cases that demonstrate solidarity among interest groups in the continent.

Thus, such initiatives saw the birth of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) which was later renamed as the African Union (AU). Further, there are numerous continental bodies representing social and professional interests of its members. Such initiatives include but are not limited to: The Confederation of African Football (CAF) in sports, African Union Army, whose mandate is to coordinate peace keeping initiatives in nation-states facing civil wars such as Darfur-Sudan and Congo DR, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

For the purpose of this study, there are women's networks and associations that are evidence of fostering the intra-continental agenda. These women promote the interests of fellow women in the continent. They represent professional, political and

ordinary women in Africa. For instance, at the continental level, there is Africa Women Writers, African Women Lawyers Association, and African Women Educators Association, just to mention a few. At the regional level, for instance, in Southern Africa, there are bodies such as SADC Gender Networks, SADC Gender Links, SADC Women Lawyers and SADC Women Parliamentarians.

Other forms of cultural or product flow within the framework of Continentalisation

Ethiopians dancing to Kukere in the heart of Addis-Ababa. Beautiful. They must have been practising the moves for an eternity. Nigerians, this is no longer your song now. Ethiopia has adopted it as its own. (Stanley Onjezani Kenani, 23 November, 2014 at <https://www.facebook.com/stanley.kenani?fref=ts>)

The above quote is taken from the Facebook page of Onjezani Kenani, one of Malawi's renowned poets who, while on a visit in Ethiopia, saw the locals dancing *Kukere*, which, according to his knowledge, is a Nigerian dance. He concludes the adoption of *Kukere* (originally a Nigerian dance *Konkere*) by the local residents of Ethiopia is a testimony that the song is now a cross border product. In his statement it can be deduced that the *Kukere* is no longer a dance to be exclusively associated with Nigerians, rather, it is a local dance for the Ethiopians as well. Based on the quote above, it can be suggested that *Kukere* dance is a product of continentalisation as it bears evidence of the cultural flow from Nigeria to Ethiopia. This is just one of several songs or dances that are products of the continentalisation process. There are other dances too that share common traits across Africa such as Azonto (originally from Ghana), Rhumba (originally from Zimbabwe), Kwasakwasa (originally from Democratic Republic of Congo) and Kwaito (originally from South Africa).

Although these dances originate from specific nation states, they are adopted by recipient cultures and they become part of their traditional or cultural dances. Thus, the dance as an art forms part of the cultural repertoire transmitted through Nollywood films.

Religion is another aspect of continentalisation that is identical across African societies and would be defined within the framework of continentalisation. For instance, during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, religion served as a source of hope and inspiration for the victimised continent. In the history of African struggle, religion has acted as a force for liberation. Campbell (1988:76) contends that “‘Africa for the Africans’ became the cry of the dispersed Africans using religious language in the nineteenth century and articulating this racial consciousness as Pan-Africanism in the twentieth century.” When colonialism ended, the masses in the independent African communities sought avenues of self-expression and independent movement. Since then, African communities have revolutionised religion to respond to their spiritual and emotional needs. The African religious movements have made attempts to break away from the long established Western indoctrinated religious traditions evident in Christianity. Proponents of independent African churches claim that this is a form of liberation that the African masses are propagating to free their consciousness from ‘foreign’ religion that was imposed on them by the colonial and slave trade operatives. Meyer (2004: 448) observes that:

The emergence of these new figures suggests that the appropriation of Christianity in Africa has entered a new phase. If in the 1980s Independent Churches were found to be attractive, by African Christians as well as researchers, above all because they seemed to

offer a more "authentic," Africanized version of Christianity than do the presumably Western-oriented mainline churches, current Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) appear to derive their mass appeal at least partly from propagating a complete break with the past.

The recent spread of Christian Pentecostalism across Africa is a Pan-Africanist response to what is considered as irrelevant religious rituals and practices by some in the mainstream Christian churches (Fernandez, 1978). The Pentecostal movement therefore offers an alternative route to restoring a sense of religious worship and practices relevant to the African way of life (Ranger, 1986).

Conceptualising Nollywood as Agency of Pan-Africanism and Continentalisation

With the end of colonisation in most African states, cinema as an art form free of the demands of literacy seemed an ideal medium to impart a Pan-African discourse that could engage the continent. The emergence of African film in the 1960s pioneered by Ousmane Sembene was an apparent response to this call (Diawara, 1992; Thackway, 2003). Unfortunately, the efforts of the pioneering African filmmakers did not achieve this objective. Arguably, most of their films never engaged their audiences from the onset and hence, they remained largely unknown to the popular audience. There are several key factors that led to this situation in post-colonial Africa: political censorship, dominance of foreign ideologies in the film discourse and difficulties in accessing funding opportunities. Other scholars like Sembene include language as another key factor. Sembene argues that whatever language one uses limits audience and further notes that subtitles do not help with audiences without literacy (see Bisschoff, 2009). However, recent studies on the experience of

Nollywood audiences suggest the contrary as discussed earlier in this chapter and chapter two of the thesis (see Ugochukwu, 2009; Ugochukwu, 2013).

Firstly, most post-colonial presidents in the 1960s suppressed political dissent and films containing Pan-Africanist discourse such as those of Sembene were banned (McCall, 2007). Secondly, virtually all of the cinema houses on the continent were foreign-owned and had little interest in promoting politically conscious films of native film-makers (ibid). McCall adds that African film-makers were simply not able to access the foreign-controlled infrastructures that delivered cinema to the continent. Thirdly, as earlier stated in this thesis, the difficult economic situation forced most filmmakers out of a job and this laid a fertile ground for the development of video making as they could not afford the cost of celluloid film production (Haynes, 2006; 2007; 2010; Okome, 2010).

Nollywood films emerged in the early 1990s as a response to an African audience that had long been yearning for a film culture that they could call their own. Today, Nollywood as a media remains the most popular film industry in Nigeria and beyond. Its popularity is due to its ability to reach remote and non-elite audiences. Arguably, Nollywood has a Pan-Africanist mission in the way that it tackles the sensitive governance issues that are affecting the contemporary societies as McCall notes:

The industry appears to remain immune to exploitation by Nigeria's notoriously powerful kleptocrats. Instead, every time a corrupt governor or lascivious clergyman is exposed, the scandal is dramatised and folklorised as a Nollywood drama-enhanced with showy special effects. While Nigerian publishers and editors may

risk assassination if they publish criticism of their leaders, Nollywood boldly continues to generate popular discourse on the corrupt government gaudily dressed up as entertainment. (2007:94)

Despite criticism, particularly from the elite quarters both inside and outside Africa, Nollywood is conceivably a primary catalyst in an emergent continent-wide popular discourse about what it means to be African. It is as a result of its Africanness that Nollywood is able to generate continent-wide discourse about the problem of representing Africa and its diverse cultures. Arguably, it is Nollywood's ability to engage the common villager as well as the socially privileged in all corners of Africa that makes it relevant to its audiences in the continent. I would argue that the film is an agent of continentalisation. I would suggest that Nollywood, as a catalyst of continentalisation, is a unifying factor of African cultures which, through film, would identify a homogenous culture amidst their specific attributes. McCall sums it up:

While a certain sense of unity could be evoked from the shared experience of colonial domination and the struggle for independence, the poets of Negritude and the philosophers of pan-Africanism longed to discover and cultivate a common cultural core. They sought a deep and distinctively African rhythm that would resonate in the hearts of people from Dakar to Nairobi, providing the backbeat for a cultural poetics that could ring as true in a Congo village as on the streets of Johannesburg. (2007: 92)

In conclusion, this sub-section has discussed the two theoretical frameworks and has demonstrated their relationship and relevance to the study. As stated earlier, although Pan-Africanism is fraught with flaws it remains the political ideology that has to keep on being tested. Continentalisation, although a new and untested concept, arguably remains the alternative movement that could be responsive to the

contemporary social, cultural, economic and political needs of the present African societies in ideological terms.

SECTION THREE

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

Contesting positions in African gender/feminist scholarship

There are contested perspectives in gender and feminist scholarship on female representation in Africa. Some scholars argue that female representation among African societies must be studied in their own terms, and that African gender knowledge must be a factor in devising any theory to interrogate the mode of representation (Amadiume, 1987; 2000; 2005). However, other scholars contend that with the changing world, due to advances in technology and social interactions within a global village, it is impractical for one to ignore the influence of other cultures on African societies. They argue that any idea of total rejection of the impact of foreign cultures on Africa is absolutely unsustainable (Bakare-Yusuf, 2004).

Oyewumi (1997; 2004; 2005) contends that the narrative of gendered corporeality that dominates the Western interpretations of the social world is a cultural discourse. She argues against the Western held notions that place gender as a universal and timeless social phenomenon that cannot be divorced from the ideology of biological determination of sex. She criticises the Western definitions of gender which she describes as simplistic as they reduce gender to biological factors of males and

females. She argues that for this reason Western theories cannot effectively interrogate female representation in African societies. Thus, maleness and femaleness in African societies are not grounded in biological categorisation: “though gender is proclaimed to be socially constructed, the way it is used in dominant discourses implies that it is a biologically determined category” (Oyewumi, 2005: xiii). However, one could argue that not all theories of gender do reduce it to biology under Western feminist discourse.

Oyewumi states that in most African societies, social roles are not biological roles. Citing practices and beliefs among the Yoruba of Nigeria, she argues that gender is based on the factors of seniority and lineage of the members of the family. She claims that maleness or femaleness is a socially construed notion among the Yoruba people rather than biologically determined. She contends that the same principal applies to the notion of husband and wife. In Yoruba culture being a wife or a husband does not depend on one’s biological category but rather on lineage and seniority factors. She therefore challenges the notion of universal patriarchy as advanced by Western scholars in their analysis of African societies, noting that “discussions of social categories should be defined and grounded in the local milieu, rather than based on universal findings made in the West,” (Oyewumi, 2005: 15).

Oyewumi describes the categorisation of women in Western feminist discourse as a homogeneous, bio-anatomically determined group. She argues that this approach renders women powerless and victims in the eyes of society. She further states that

this does not reflect the fact that gender relations and social relations are historically grounded and culturally bound. She remarks that:

If gender is a social construction, then we must examine the various cultural/architectural sites where it was constructed, and we must acknowledge that various located actors (aggregates, groups, interested persons) are part of the construction. We must further acknowledge that if gender is a social construction, then there was a specific time (in different cultural/architectural sites) when it was constructed and therefore a time before which it was not. Thus gender being a social construction is also a historical and cultural phenomenon. (Oyewumi, 2005: 10)

Amadiume (1987) deconstructs the word 'gender' in the Igbo context. She claims to expose what she terms as flaws in earlier studies of Igbo society by Western scholars. She demonstrates how misleading biological categories can be in the study of sex and gender since in her view either sex can assume socially viable roles as male or female. Grounding her studies in precolonial society, Amadiume argues that sex and gender among the traditional Igbo do not necessarily coincide. She cites women's roles as goddesses in Igbo society, clan heads and family heads by virtue of being the breadwinner in their extended families either through subsistence farming or trading. She posits that these are some of the critical structures that enabled them to achieve power before changes in the colonial times undermined women's status and reduced their political role in the colonial and post-colonial era. She argues that roles were neither masculinised nor feminised.

Amadiume criticises Western culture and Christian religion brought by colonialism for carrying rigid gender ideologies which aid and support the exclusion of women from the power hierarchy in most of present-day African society including the Igbo

communities (Amadiume, 1987). In contrast to the traditional pre-colonial societies, she argues that the rigid gender system in modern post-colonial societies implies that roles are strictly masculinised or feminised. Hence any attempt to break these adopted gender roles attract stigma in most of modern day post-colonial African societies. Nevertheless, Amadiume observes that there are still existing pockets of resistance to male or patriarchal dominance in present-day African societies (ibid).

Oyewumi's and Amadiume's view is supported by Kisiang'ani (2004). He claims that the introduction of Western concepts regarding sex, sexuality and gender distorts the long held beliefs and practices of African gender which was not based on sex. He argues that in the colonial era, Africans were trained to perceive things only from a Western European standpoint, often universalised to embrace all humanity. Effectively, Kisiang'ani argues, Western ideals informed all intellectual discourse about African people, while concurrently criminalising and atomising the culture and value of the African. He claims that, the concept of African women as articulated in Western scholarship presents them as inferior, speechless beings, housekeepers, and breeders. Conversely, African women have enjoyed the protection and power provided to them by traditional cultures through lineage and spiritual systems as argued earlier by Oyewumi and Amadiume.

Kisiang'ani therefore proposes several areas to be considered for the effective study of African societies, and women's issues in particular and he proposes an Afro-centric approach. Firstly, although contentious, he suggests that any study to do with African culture has to be carried out by an insider. In this regard he proposes that an

African should study African society. While this might appear plausible, one could argue that since gender/ feminist issue are predominant women issue, any research that has to do with feminism/ gender relations should only be conducted by women only. I would argue that such scenario could be retrospective to efforts men are putting in the field of gender and social relations including in films as the case is with this study.

Secondly, Kisiang'ani advocates for the consideration of time as a factor whenever issues of women studies are concerned. He proposes that emphasis should be given to an analysis of special processes on a continuum that will involve the past, the present and the future. He makes references to the forces of globalisation through urbanisation, education and modernity as areas that need to be considered for a fair understanding and analysis of women's issues in present-day African societies. Thirdly, complementing the time factor is the issue of cultural relativity (ibid). Kisiang'ani contends that any study on African societies, let alone on women's representation, should put an emphasis on culture:

Culture has valuable and positive assets and provides effective models for gender research that can lead to the empowerment and advancement of African women. So, rather than dismiss African cultures as archaic, we need to conduct more studies using culture as the paradigmatic framework that has the potential of producing action-oriented research capable of transforming society and empowering women. (Kisiang'ani, 2004: 54-55)

After assessing various feminist and gender debates surrounding women's representation in diverse situations, Nnaemeka (2003:357) proposes 'nego-feminism' as opposed to African feminism in interrogating gender issues on the

continent. Nnaemeka defines ‘nego-feminism’ as a negotiation of gender codes that would see the incorporation of African cultural perspectives in view of their differences and commonalities. She contends that nego-feminism will factor in the reality that African societies have diverse cultures whilst at the same time having shared values that can be used as organising principles to investigate female representation in African societies and in literary works. The idea of incorporating cultural diversity in interrogating women’s studies on the continent is shared by Etounga- Manguelle (2000) who notes: “the number of subcultures [in Africa] is undeniable. But there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes, and institutions that bind together the nations south of the Sahara, and in many respects those of the north as well,” (quoted in Nnaemeka, 2003: 6).

However critics are quick to question the relevance of scientific tools among the acclaimed African feminist/gender scholars that would give a true reflection of female representation in African societies. In his critique of Oyewumi’s book *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997), Bakare- Yusuf (2004) questions the trend in most of the African feminist/gender scholarship that disregard any Western authored theories interrogating female representation in African societies and in African art works. He accuses Oyewumi and other Afro-centric proponents such as Amadiume (1997) and Okome (2007) of falling into the trap of applying gender principles, which, he argues, are grounded in the claim that they represent African thought and everyday lived realities. He argues that theorists like Oyewumi base their analysis on the history of a traditional African society which he claims often does not resonate with the realities of present-day

African cultures. He thus claims that cultures in African societies are ever evolving. He rebuts Oyewumi's argument of Yoruba's genderless culture in which she states that gender is assigned based on the order of seniority and not based on one's sex.

Bakare-Yusuf argues that in the present-day Africa, due to a capitalist economy, a person is likely to surrender his senior status to a younger person due to education and wealth, claiming that these are "factors that are very much in control of loyalty in most societies" (2004: 79). He therefore contends that the discourse of power relations remains fluid in the prevailing environment unlike the historical traditional African societies. In this regard, Bakare-Yusuf suggests that any power relation relates to the economic status of an individual and not necessarily due to seniority in age as argued by Oyewumi. Thus, he implies that gender is determined by economic status and not by seniority as Oyewumi claims, nor by one's sex as in the Western concept (see Amadiume, 1987).

In the light of the cultural diversity the present day societies vis-à-vis the advent of modernity or global culture infiltrating in rural and urban Africa, Bakare-Yusuf therefore concludes by cautioning against the wholesale rejection of Western gender/feminist theories as proposed by the proponents of Afro-centric views:

We must reject outright any attempt to assign a particular conceptual category as belonging only to the 'West' and therefore inapplicable to the African situation. For millennia, Africa has been part of Europe just as Europe has been part of Africa. Out of this relation, a whole series of borrowed traditions from both sides have been, and continue to be, brewed and fermented. (Bakare-Yusuf, 2004: 79)

He therefore proposes an open-minded approach to defining the African gender concept in which conflicting ideas should be given an opportunity to be considered. He thus argues that “what is now required is an open space where multiple, even contradictory structures and conceptual categories can be productively engaged in our theories. Only in this way can we understand and maintain African local knowledge in the plural” (ibid).

Based on the discussion in this section as argued in various scholarships, I find the argument in Bakare-Yusuf (2004:79) most pertinent in the study of gender relations in modern day African societies. Likewise, the concept of gender and its interpretation are dependent on time. As a social construct, gender is fluid and it evolves as it is subject to other external cultural factors. Although Afro-centric theories are critical in my analysis of audiences’ responses to representation in Nollywood films as argued earlier on in this section, I find Bakare-Yusuf’s position plausible. His stance as presented in the two quotes above suggests that his proposal is responsive to the cultural diversity of the ever evolving respondents’ worldview. I therefore draw on his ideas especially in analysing responses of urban participants.

As the discussion of the concept of African gender revolves around cultural orientations of the societies or communities involved (see Amadiume, 1987a; 1987b; 1997; 2004; 2005; Oyewumi, 1997; 2005), the next section, therefore, discusses cultural theories that I employ as tools in understanding how various cultural representations play a role in interpreting gender relations mostly in the popular art form, and, for the purpose of this study, in Nollywood films.

Cultural theories and their relevance to interpreting audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films

Discussing Hall's Theory of Cultural Representation

Hall (1997:1) regards culture as to do with “shared meanings.” He argues that language is the privileged medium in which we make sense of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged. Hence, he contends, language is central to meaning and culture, adding it “has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings”. Hall explains that language is able to construct meanings by using symbols and signs to stand for or transmit to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings:

Language is one of the media through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. Whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects. Representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced. (1997: 1)

Hall argues that culture is defined within the framework of meaning, language and representation. He says members of the same culture must share sets of concepts, images and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus interpret the world, in roughly similar ways. In other words, Hall suggests that members of the same culture must share the same cultural codes. In this sense, he explains, thinking and feeling are themselves systems of representation, in which our concepts, images and emotions stand for or represent, in our mental world, things which are or may be out there in the world. Hence, in order to communicate

meanings to other people the participants of any meaningful exchange must also be able to use the same linguistic codes:

They must be able to understand perfectly what anyone who speaks the same language is saying. They must speak enough of the same language to be able to 'translate' what 'you' say into what 'I' understand, and vice versa. They must be able to read visual images in roughly similar ways. They must be familiar with broadly the same ways of producing sounds to make what they would both recognise as music. They must know how to translate their feelings and ideas into these various languages. (ibid: 4)

Hall uses a social constructionist approach in using language to interpret culture in which he suggests meaning is thought to be produced or constructed rather than simply found. Hall deploys two approaches to his study of representation using language; - semiotics and discursive approaches. The semiotic approach, on the one hand, provides a general model of how culture and representation work. Hall underlines the role of discourse in constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice which entails the formation of ideas, images and practices which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic. On the other hand, the discursive approach is more concerned with the effects and consequences of representation. Thus, it examines not only how language and representation produce meaning but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities. He argues that "things don't mean themselves: we construct meaning using representational systems-concepts and signs," adding, "it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts" (ibid: 28).

As this study assumes that the exposure of Nigerian films to Malawian audiences for the past decade could lead to changes in attitudes, behaviour and perception of the Malawian public towards women, Hall's theory of cultural representation is relevant to this study in two ways. Firstly, it makes my work of interpreting and analysing film texts effective in relation to African vis-à-vis Malawi/ Nigerian cultural representation. Secondly, the theory helps me to explain the meaning, cultural beliefs and practices of the audiences who give their own perspectives of Nollywood films based on their respective individual or collective cultural experiences. Since each and every culture is associated with a particular identity, the following section discusses identity as expounded in Hall (1990).

Theory of Cultural Identity and its implication for audiences' interpretation of female representation in film

Discussing Hall's Theory of cultural identity

Hall (1990) discusses the concept of cultural identity as central in social relationships. He states that there are two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. He explains that the first position defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective which is common across people with a shared history and ancestry. Hall states:

Our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (223)

The above quote, Hall suggests that cultural identity is a product of history in a way that for the people to claim to be identified as one culturally there must be a

process that draws their similarities over a period of time. Thus, Hall is suggesting that cultural identity implies more commonalities than differences in terms of values, beliefs, practices and to some extent life styles. He thus asserts that this sort of identity is not grounded in past experiences or history but rather it is grounded in the on-going processes and practices that redefine present social and political life. He points out that this concept of cultural identity played a critical role in all the post-colonial struggles that characterised the vision of 'Negritude' that epitomised the pan-African political project. He further explains that the second view of cultural identity recognises that, as much as there are many points of similarity, there are also critical points of difference which he says constitute 'what we really are' or 'what we really have become' (Hall, 1990: 225). He argues that cultural identity in this instance is a matter of becoming as well as of being.

Hall agrees with other scholars (see Omoniyi and White, 2006) who suggest that identity is a social and cultural phenomenon that is influenced by time. He contends that cultural identity belongs to the future as much as to the past. He states that cultural identities in this regard come from somewhere and thus, have histories. He is, however, quick to point out that like everything else which is historical, such identities transcend place, time, history and culture. Hence, they undergo a constant transformation. Hall notes that:

Far from being externally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the

different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (1990: 225)

Thus, Hall states that cultural identity is not a fixed essence which lies unchanged outside history and culture. He argues that it is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. Nevertheless, he points out that stating that cultural identity is not a once-and-for-all phenomenon does not imply that it is a mere phantasm. Hence, it has its histories which have real, material and symbolic effects. He argues that the past continues to speak to the people affected by a specific cultural identity but no longer as a simple, factual fact. He equates the process to that of a child's relation to the mother which notes "It is always constructed after through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning" (Hall, 1990: 226).

The impact of film texts on audiences' construction of identities

Cohen (2001) discusses how audiences identify themselves with film or television characters. He states that when reading a novel or watching a film or a television programme, audience members often become absorbed in the plot and identify with the characters portrayed, arguing that audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them (ibid). Other audience studies scholars support this observation. For example, both Basil (1996) and Maccoby & Wilson (1957) argue that identification is tied to the social effects of media. Huesmann et al. (1984) state that audiences gradually come

to learn about violence result in some eventually becoming violent as they are exposed to violent films and television programmes. They found that identifying with aggressive characters on TV increased the learning of aggressive behaviour by children. Basil (1996) found that identification with celebrities who were promoting health messages increased the adoption of these messages. Maccoby and Wilson's study (1957) revealed that children remembered more of the actions and speech of characters with whom they identified. Although this position has been widely contested by many other scholars who question media effects' theories, it forms the basis of interrogating Nollywood's female representation as a potential source of audiences' change of attitude and perception.

Audience and ethnographic studies suggest that when asked to discuss their reactions to shows, television viewers will often focus on their feelings and reactions to characters, including mentions of strong identification with characters (Cohen, 2001). Erikson (1968) states that identifying with media experiences such as those reflected in television programme characters or film characters, allows audiences to experience social reality from other perspectives and, thus, shapes the development of self-identity and social attitudes. Wollheim (1974) makes his observation regarding the experience of audiences in imagining they are the characters they watch in the process of identification. He concludes that "In effect what we do when we identify with another is that we write a part of ourselves, based upon the other, in the hope that, when we act it to ourselves, we shall be carried away by the performance" (191). Employing the theory of identity, chapters five to eight of the thesis attempt to explore the extent to which Nollywood film's portrayal could lead

the audiences to identify themselves with the film characters. Through the participants' responses, the thesis further examines the extent to which such adoption or identification could lead to the reconstruction of their perception.

Theory of Subjectivity and its relevance to analysing audiences' reaction to female representation in film

The question of subjectivity has been discussed extensively in scholarship on sociology, culture, anthropology, film, gender and post-colonial studies. The subject areas define and discuss subjectivity in different ways. Berger and Luckmann (2011) define subjectivity as a social construction of reality. They examine how knowledge forms and how it is preserved and altered within society. Unlike other authors before them, the two scholars go beyond intellectual history and focus on normal everyday life. Thus, from a sociological perspective, they look at the proverbs, morals, values and beliefs shared among ordinary people and their impact on individuals' world view which leads to their subjective interpretations of reality. Ferguson (1993) discusses subjectivity from both feminist and post-colonial perspectives. She states that subjectivity should be understood within the context of the interpretation of the power relations that exist in society that places women both as subject and object of the reality formed out of society's world view. She argues that interpretation is usually a subject-centred phenomenon in dealing with the issue of the colonised and the coloniser in post-colonial discourse. With regard to the interpretation of the truth, she acknowledges that there is more to the meaning than what is apparently manifested to outside world. She argues "interpretation always has to balance the

ability of power to distort the world-view of the powerless with the ability to comprehend and transcend their continent” (14).

In dealing with the issue of the interpretation of women’s roles in society from a feminist perspective, Ferguson recognises the relevance of subjectivity. She states that the concept of subjectivity deals with the struggles for equity within existing structures and theories that oppress women. She claims that “the entry for women into the importance of sharing with men the activities of transcendence and creativity that mark the uniquely human arena” (2011: 15).

Cowie (2011) addresses subjectivity from a cinematic perspective. She argues that reality is when something is revealed as audiences try to make sense of what they see and hear. When watching a film, a viewer encounters some experience of the real situation appearing on the screen. Such an experience engages the viewer’s imaginative remaking of his or her understanding in seeing the phenomenon differently and indeed in seeing something new. Chateau (2011) discusses subjectivity from the perspective of the spectator’s experience of film representation. He explains the role of the camera in influencing or forming subjective interpretations of the film among the audiences. He argues that “the subjective camera allows the audience to experience film in a wholly different way, manipulating or enriching viewers and forcing them to engage with film as a medium” (1). Nichols (1991) examines subjectivity in the way documentary film represents reality and how the audiences interpret it. He states that situations and events, actions and issues may be represented in a variety of ways. He lists

strategies, conventions and constructs as factors that come into play to establish commonality among different texts in a film documentary. He contends that the texts, once formed, are placed within the same discursive formation at a given historical moment “modes of representation are basic ways of organising texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions” (32).

Subjectivity and variance in audiences’ reaction to films

Michelle et al. (2012) attest that viewers’ responses are shaped by external factors that affect their perception and worldview. They argue that audience responses to film text are highly contextualised:

Receptions are always situated and contextually specific, simultaneously individual and social in nature, they are highly likely to be patterned in discernible ways based on viewers’ demographic characteristics, social group memberships and discursive affiliations. Clearly establishing the underlying subjective orientations that govern sense-making is thus an important first step in efforts to more clearly understand how, and under what conditions, shared identities and social locations shape individual reception. (2012: 117)

Esrock (2005) suggests that although the media disseminate texts, whether for information or persuasive purposes, it rests upon the audiences to decide how they respond to such messages. He says ultimately, individual perceptions and interpretations reveal the true meaning, no matter what may have been intended. But I would argue that this is a contentious notion in itself. It can be argued that the notion of truth is debatable and subject to the interpreter and the signifier. However, Michelle et al. (2007) agree with Esrock’s position and they go further in stating that viewers’ perceptions are largely influenced by different media texts and

technologies. They observe that audiences engage with a diverse range of screen media during the course of their everyday lives, be it via films (DVD or cinema) or television. They argue that it is no longer feasible to imagine that those individuals reserve entirely unique processes of interpretation and engagement for each of these separate media. Michelle et al. contend

Reception is not determined by them, since it is fundamentally a process that pertains to socially located individuals. Those individuals draw from their own general pool of experiences and understandings, psychological tendencies, discursive allegiances, and cultural competencies as they serially engage with different visual media over the course of each day. (2007: 109)

In relation to the present study, subjectivity is crucial in helping to interpret individual audience's response to female representation in films as shown in chapter six of the thesis. As discussed in the section above, subjectivity theory is essential as a tool to explain the variation in viewers' responses to a similar representation. However, as well as subjectivity in audience's responses, cultural appropriation is equally pertinent in relation to audiences' use of media products, in this case, films. The next section, therefore, discusses the scholarship that guide the concept of appropriation and viewers' application of it as a result of their exposure to film's representation of females.

Theory of Cultural Appropriation and its role in interpreting 'social change' among the audiences

Young (2005) states that an analysis of the concept of a given culture is in effect an attempt to give an identity to the people who share that culture. Thus, he argues: "the

concept of cultural appropriation has no application unless insiders and outsiders, members and non-members of a culture, can be distinguished” (136). Notwithstanding this definition of culture, he notes the problem with defining culture in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions:

Cultures are intertwined and overlap. The same person may be said to belong to Western culture, New England culture, Boston culture, Christian culture, and African-American culture. A given ethnicity might seem to be a necessary condition of membership in certain cultures, but ethnicities are frequently confused as cultures. (ibid)

There are different facets of cultural appropriation in relation to film texts. On one hand, the film makers: - directors, producers and actors may appropriate a film to serve various interests such as: - political, religious, commercial, entertainment and social, just to mention a few scenarios (see Schneider, 2003). On the other hand, the consumers of the film texts, when exposed to them for a reasonable period begin to react to whatever they view. In the long run, their viewing experiences negotiate and renegotiate with their real life experiences and arguably, a hybrid culture emerges (see Canclini, 1995). This suggests that new culture is never the original of what they were exposed to and whatever they do now is neither a representation of their own culture nor the wholesale adoption of the new culture. Thus, it is a movement that neither looks backward nor forward. The filmmakers, using cinema or video in this way, act as the agency of communicating cultural knowledge for social and political ends through the social processes of mediation via the cultural representations (Hall, 1990, 1992). It has been suggested that audiences appropriate the adopted culture to make it relevant to their social, economic and religious tastes

(see Schneider, 2003). Such a gradual, although sometimes fast, process breeds a new identity within the consumers or audiences of the popular 'new' culture (Pack, 2001). Schneider (2003: 224) summarises the process of appropriation as follows: "this aspect of appropriation has to do with the essential elements of difference that mark out the degree of divergence between cultures, and the 'alternative' processes of recognising such differences." Boon as quoted in Schneider (2003:224) points to the process of how cultures, perfectly commonsensical from within, nevertheless flirt with their own 'alternities', gain critical self-distance, formulate complex perspectives on others, embrace negatives and confront what they themselves are not. Appropriation therefore helps the study to analyse social changes among the local audiences in Malawi and ascertain if they are the effects of Nollywood films.

Based on the above discussion, the authors have raised relevant lines of thoughts that have direct relation to my study. This section has discussed how the issue of subjectivity is critical to addressing audiences' diverse responses. As Nollywood films are culturally oriented and its audiences too are arguably highly culturally opined, the issue of subjectivity is essential in interpreting representation from the perspectives of the viewer respondent. And the issue of culture cannot be divorced from language. The next discussion therefore focuses on discourse and conversation as tools to analyse female representation in Nollywood films.

Discourse and Conversational Analysis Theories and their relevance to

analysing audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films

Fairclough's Discourse Analysis Theories

Fairclough (2003) defines the term discourse as ways of representing aspects of the world processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. He acknowledges that discourse can be used to examine various aspects of representations in social and public life. He furthermore elaborates that discourses not only present the world as it is, they are also projective and imaginary, representing possible worlds which are different from the 'actual' world. He argues discourses are tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. He describes the relationships between discourses as both complementary and competitive:

They may complement one another, compete with one another, one can dominate others, and so forth. Discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another- keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, and dominating- and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another. (124)

Fairclough applies the term 'order of discourse' to the semiotic dimension of the articulated network of social practices. He uses the term 'text' in an extended way for the semiotic dimension of social events. He contends that social practices and, at a concrete level, social events, are articulations of diverse social elements and these social practices are manifested in various forms such as in activities, values, knowledge, belief and social relations. He therefore describes discourses as diverse representations of social life. For instance, the plight of women in society is represented through different discourses in the social practices of governments, politics, medicine, and social sciences. Moreover, he

argues that this is further represented through different discourses within each of these practices corresponding to the different positions of social actors.

Unlike Hall who uses language as a tool to explain meaning within a cultural context, Fairclough is concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse (Fairclough, 2003). As a constructionist, Fairclough does acknowledge that things can have a real, material existence in the world. However, adopting Foucault's (1984) thesis of the order of discourse, he argues that nothing has any meaning outside of discourse. Unlike Hall who positions the subject at the centre of meaning in representation, Fairclough places discourse at the centre. He contends that the subject of discourse cannot be outside the discourse because it must be subjected to the discourse.

Fairclough further models his argument on Foucault's theory of discursive approach in which he claims it is not the subject who produces text and knowledge, rather it is the discourse: "subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture. The subject is produced within discourse," (Foucault, 1984 cited in Fairclough, 2003: 45). In his thesis on discourse, Foucault proposes that models of representation have to focus on the models of knowledge and power to understand the relations of power within a particular discourse and not relations of meaning in a language (Foucault, 1984). Owing to the above introduction and discussion of Fairclough's discourse analysis theory, this thesis benefits from the adoption of some of the notions of the theory in analysing audience's response to female representations in films. Audience's react or respond to

female representation using discourse in the portrayals: verbal, signal, gesture and body expression. It is for this reason that Fairclough's notions of discourse analysis be used as a tool to interpret and understand audiences' discourses and their implications in relation to female representation. Discourse is presented in various forms and conversation is one of them. The next chapter therefore discusses conversation analysis and its role in interpreting focus group discussions.

Conversation Analysis

Psathas (1995) states that conversation analysis studies the order of social action, particularly that which is located in everyday interaction, in discursive practices evident in the "sayings or tellings or doings of members of society" (1). Levinson (1983) goes further in drawing a distinction between conversation analysis and discourse analysis. He claims that discourse analysis attempts to develop a set of basic categories or units of discourse, in order to find specific and delimited sets unit acts, and to formulate rules concerning well-informed categories from ill-informed ones. Hutchby and Wooffitt (2009:12) look at conversation analysis as the study of recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction. They add that the approach focuses on the production and interpretation of talk-in-interaction as an orderly accomplishment that is oriented to by the participants themselves. Richards and Seedhouse (2005) consider the difference between conversation analysis and linguistic analysis. They argue that conversation analysis' primary interest is in the social act and only marginally in language, whereas the primary interest in linguistic analysis is normally language. They claim that in linguistic analysis, the objective is to examine how aspects of languages are organised in relation to each other. They note that "conversation analysis is interested in how social acts are packaged and

delivered in linguistic terms” (251). Ten Have (1999) attests that conversation analysis’ obsession with trivial details ensures the validity of its claims. He maintains conversation analysis provides a break from traditional approaches of social analysis. He argues

Conversation Analysis does not tend to use existing theories of language, society, psychology to explain interaction that the participants themselves are orienting to such theories. Conversation Analysis refuses to take context into account as it declines to invoke obviously relevant contextual features such as participants’ social status, gender, race etc. There is indefinite number of external aspects of cultural, social or personal identity or context that could be potentially relevant to any given instance of talk-in-interaction. (ibid: 27)

The above quote suggests that conversation analysis is self-defining, self-explanatory and self-evident in between or among the discussants. It further suggests that the approach reduces the burden of the analyst to locate or situate his study on a number of variables such as gender, race or social status. Rather, the approach reassures arguably acceptable degree of efficiency and effectiveness that instills confidence in the researcher as it probably provides leads on the face value. However, this does not suggest that conversation analysis is not entirely dependent on external factors as other social sciences approaches. Allen and Guy (1974) discuss social factors that influence or affect the way conversation analysis would establish its claim in social behaviour.

Relevance of Discourse and Conversation Analysis to the understanding of audiences’ response

Discourse and conversational analysis are critical to the interpretation of Malawian audiences’ responses or reaction to female representation in Nollywood films. As will be

discussed in chapters five to nine (see Subjectivity and audiences' variance reaction to film in chapter seven), audiences' responses to films are a result of their worldview which is a construct of their respective cultures. Audiences' attitude towards a certain behaviour or expression is a culmination of their experience in the context, hence, when they are exposed to a similar experience in a film, their reaction may be receptive or resistant to the apparent cultural representation. The understanding of discourse and conversation analysis helps to uncover cultural meanings lying behind the conversation and discourse in the local cultural context. In particular, as chapters five to eight of the thesis will show, the discourse surrounding women in the audiences' narrative during data collection arguably form the basis for establishing the status or place of women in Malawian society. This therefore presents an opportunity to explore the potential impact of Nollywood films to intervene in social issues presently affecting the women. Hence, discourse and conversational analysis, as with cultural theories discussed earlier, are arguably effective theoretical tools that I employ to investigate and analyse audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films.

Kozloff's Dialogue Analysis Theory in Narrative Film

Although the camera can take us anywhere, identifying the location is trickier. All visual images are polysemous; their meanings must be anchored by resort to verbal signs (which is why paintings are given titles, photographs captions, and tourist postcards, geographical labels). One city skyline, one mountain region, one medieval castle looks very much like another unless its specificity is identified by some means. (Kozloff, 2000:35)

The above quote offers a summary of the relevance of dialogue in the analysis of film.

The quote suggests that in the absence of dialogue, film is incomplete. It furthers

underscores the fact that aesthetics alone cannot make a film complete. Thus, the quote appears to endorse that there are some aspects of the film that visuals alone cannot explain. A case in point, as Kozloff has pointed out, is presence of city skyline, paintings, and towers and so forth which may look alike across the state or region and they can only be identified or traced in their individuality by a caption.

It is against this observation that this work will adopt Kozloff's theory to film analysis in which she invents a semiotic approach to use narrative theory to analyse the functions that dialogue typically serves in a film, catalogue formal and stylistic parameters, and show how dialogue works in tandem with other cinematic elements. The use of dialogue analysis theory will help the study in interpreting the film dialogues in Nollywood and at the same time help to understand the focus group's dialogue in reaction to the narratives in the melodrama.

Kozloff cites several functions of a dialogue in a film. She states that film uses dialogue to identify the diegetic world. She explains that dialogue anchors a narrative that makes it easy for a viewer to locate or identify the character and the discourse surrounding the narrative. Thus, the dialogue paves the way for a viewer to understand the visuals, repeats their information for emphasis, interprets what is shown, and explains what cannot be communicated visually (39). In this case, a dialogue is the preeminent means of communicating to the viewer story events that took place before the time period pictured on screen. Since background events are never depicted, it is only through the characters' words that filmgoers learn about them. Austin (1955) and Searle (1969) equate conversation to action. They state that conversation can be thought of as events, as

actions. They argue that when one talks, one is doing something: promising, informing, questioning, threatening, apologising.

The study therefore uses dialogue as an analytical tool to interpret conversations between films and audience's reaction to a film's conversation. Chapter four and five (methodology and data analysis) will give an illustration of this approach to dialogue. The next chapter therefore will present the methodology used for data collection and analysis for this study.

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has served two chief objectives. The main objective was to introduce and discuss the theoretical frameworks on which this study is based. The chapter has discussed Pan-Africanism and Continentalisation as the theoretical frameworks which are intertwined and inter-related. Continentalisation has been discussed as a conceptual framework which entails intra-continental cultural flow. It is regarded as an alternative movement to globalisation in the context of Africa in this study. Pan-Africanism is a political ideology and it is dependent on continentalisation for it to be successful this time around. The two theoretical frameworks are intertwined and this study is hinged upon them in an attempt to interpret, understand and appreciate the impact of female representation on Malawian audiences. By implication such interpretation of audiences' response to the portrayals would help to imagine or analyse the viewers' perception of women and ascertain whether it is as a result of their exposure to the film's portrayals.

In the same section, the chapter further discussed African feminist theories, cultural and discourse analysis theories. These theories are situated in the same section of the theoretical framework as a sub-section. The sub-section's primary purpose is to highlight supporting theories that could be used as tools to interrogate audiences' response to female representation in Nollywood films. African feminist theorists are a key in the understanding of the portrayals (female) in Nollywood on one hand, and on the other hand, the responses of participating viewers. Despite their contesting positions, African feminist theorists help in understanding the Nollywood film texts within the context of the African concept of womanhood and film. Chapters five to eight will demonstrate how these concepts are applied.

Prior to the discussion of theoretical frameworks, the chapter had previously discussed scholarship on Nollywood films in the section one. The section which is signposted as literature review presents and discusses scholarly works on the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. The section further explores scholarly works on audience studies carried out in Africa, Europe and North America regarding Nollywood and its viewership. Thus, the analysis of Nollywood scholarship helps to demonstrate the relevance of this study in adding to the knowledge of existing scholarship, and further adding new knowledge in the process of filling the gap in knowledge as discussed in chapter one, four and eight of the thesis. The scholarship on audiences helps to examine the available (some) literature on audiences study in Nollywood which helps this research to identify gaps and little examined areas to add to the body of knowledge on Nollywood. Finally, the scholarship on female representation in Nollywood helps to examine the extent the

existing scholars have gone to consider critically interrogating films' portrayal of African culture in the form of women representation. This study therefore benefits in exploring the lacunae.

As this chapter was designed for discussing various literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to the study, the next chapter therefore presents and discusses the methodology the research employed in gathering data. The chapter will further attempt to demonstrate the relevance of the methodological approaches to the study in interpreting responses from the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESEARCH

SECTION ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative

I employed a qualitative approach in the study for a number of reasons. In the first place, my study focuses on a small population, thus the research is based on findings from a sample of 83 respondents representing the nationwide population of about 15 million. Arguably, this design was intended to reach out to participants who are a fair representative of a cross-section of the country's social and cultural strands. The respondents were divided into groups of nine spread across the country. The selection of participating communities was purposively based on social, political, ethnical and religious segmentations. This approach was adopted to ensure that most of the society's interest groups stated above were represented. (Seale, 2004) states that qualitative research is an effective approach in the social sciences as it deals with human behaviour and social relations. Hence, the impact of the films on Nollywood audiences' attitude towards women falls within the realm of qualitative research.

Secondly, qualitative research allows an exploration and understanding of people's experiences, perceptions and actions as observed in Punch (2009). Punch posits that

a qualitative approach enhances the study of a particular phenomenon, underlying motives and desires. He argues that it enables the researcher to look at how people feel and think about an issue, subject or phenomenon.

Consequently, a qualitative approach is pertinent to my research in a number of ways. First and foremost, it is cost effective as it does not require sophisticated, complicated and expensive technology for data collection and processing. Further, it does not require extensive resources: it is efficient and manageable to pursue as an academic inquiry working on a limited budget without compromising the quality of the findings. Secondly, when it is done well, it is engaging, and places participants at the centre of the inquiry. Through focus group discussions, participants were given the opportunity to act as much as is possible as equal players in the study. Although the power dynamic is always an issue between the investigator and participants in a research project, the approach I employed minimised this and ensured that it was negotiable in as much as it was possible. Thus, I was satisfied that my presence did not signify superiority over them but rather they seemed to accept it as a role of a facilitator who doubled as a fellow discussant. Arguably, this underlines the belief that social sciences research, through the qualitative approach, demonstrates respect for respondents and values them as subjects of research rather than objects of scientific inquiry (Bloor, 2011).

Myers (2002) attests to the advantage of qualitative methods in that they bring richness and depth of explorations and descriptions which is critical to social sciences inquiry. Thus, the qualitative approach produced data that generated and

regenerated answers for the inquiry. This allowed the study to develop leads and probes into the subject of the inquiry, and hence, it made the exercise people-centred. Moores (1993) posits that qualitative research is an effective approach for investigating and interpreting audiences. He argues that the approach attempts to chart how media consumers make sense of the texts and technologies they encounter in everyday life:

Depending on the socio-economic and cultural placing that media consumers already occupy, the text's preferred interpretation may in certain instances be negotiated or even refused altogether. What finally determines meaning is a dialogic encounter between the two – and it is this continued conversation between texts and readers that qualitative audience research initially set out to explore. (ibid: 6)

However, critics of the qualitative method criticise its subjective approach as a weakness. I would argue that such criticism is unjustified because subjectivity in social sciences inquiry is essential from an interpretivist perspective. All “truths” are socially constructed from a particular perspective hence, no particular view, principal or tradition can claim objective truth (Crotty, 1998). Critics further question the validity of the results in qualitative research arguing that they are subject to scientific flaws (Denzin et al. (2008). They argue that the approach mostly represents specific cases which limit the generalisation of the findings. It is a valid observation that perspectives may differ from one case study to another or from one situation to another, however, it must be noted that the commonalities which are the basis of the findings give the results the probability of being credible.

My research was a case study of Nollywood audiences' responses to the film's portrayals of women. I hired nine focus groups of five to ten participants from a cross-section of the country's social and cultural strands. These focus groups were formed across the nine communities that were as representative of Malawi's ethnic, religious and social backgrounds in as much as is possible. They were drawn from urban, semi-urban and rural communities. The participants were selected randomly and the prerequisite for their involvement is that one needed to be a Nollywood enthusiasts. Cohen et al. (2007) agrees that case studies help to investigate and report the complex, dynamic and unfolding interactions of events. These include human relationships and other associated issues in a unique setting. They further add that case studies help the investigator to become an integral part of the inquiry, arguing it makes it easy for him or her to understand and interpret the issues involved in the inquiry. In the context of this thesis, the case study helped me to understand and interpret respondents' opinions on Nollywood films' representation of women in relation to their respective cultural and social contexts. Thus, through the case study of the communities and audiences spread across the country, I was able to probe extensively and analyse their responses in great detail. Ultimately, the case study approach generated a rich, detailed, contextualised set of data that recorded participants' responses that revealed their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards female members of society, which is a central issue of the thesis.

SECTION TWO

DATA COLLECTION

Data Collection Techniques

Focus Group Discussions and Grounded Theory

The study employed open-ended questions as a guide to the focus group discussions.

I adopted grounded theory as a data collection and analytical tool. As a research method, grounded theory enables me to approach sources or communities with an open mind to understand their perspectives regarding the portrayals of women in the films (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory is a data collection and analysis technique or approach that revolves around the participants. They stated that the participants' responses generate theories that inform the researcher to use such tools to probe further information from them. They further state that the theories generated become a tool to analyse the data emerging from the participants. Bryman (2008), Seale (2004) and Gray (2004) attest that grounded theory enables the researcher to go to sources or communities with an open mind to understand the respondents' perspectives. My interactions with participants at both formal and informal levels enabled me to construct meanings, theories and meta-theories that emerged from the data.

The grounded theory method corresponded with the focus group discussion as a data collection technique. It enabled me to engage participants in in-depth conversations and debates on issues relevant to the inquiry. There were follow-up questions or issues in the course of the discussions and these were necessary additions as they

offered further insights into the data. It should be noted that although I did my best to make respondents feel comfortable and respected during the discussions, cases of power dynamics within the groups could not be ruled out however. This was more an issue in the rural communities. In some instances, for some cultural reasons, the respondents created a big social distance from me. This gap in social relations between respondents and the researcher raised some concerns about the independence of the respondents. In some cases, group dynamics were a concern. For example, the combination of chiefs and their subjects or church ministers and members of their congregation raised concerns about power relations. Apparently, some participants who found themselves in a group alongside a senior church member or a traditional leader somehow felt inferior compared to their seniors. Other participants felt uncomfortable airing contradictory views and so acceded to the views of the senior ranking discussants in the group. In this way, the senior informants dominated the discussion. However, in such instances, I spent a good deal of time explaining to the respondents the need to respect each other's opinion and other ethical issues bordering on confidentiality. In particular I emphasised the equality of participants regardless of their social relations or positions in homes, workplaces or in social circles. Although this did not achieve 100 per cent success rate, it nevertheless minimised the situation where some participants felt superior and dominated others.

Further to the above observations, in some cases there was concern regarding the participation of members of the same family or work colleagues in the same group discussion. It was noted that junior members of these groups participated less than

the senior members. For example, a father appeared dominant over other family members and his wife and children agreed with his opinion. The same phenomenon was observed in groups with members from the same workplace where some senior figures dominated the proceedings. However, it should be noted that these were selective scenarios. In order to make sure that they could not affect the quality of the data in any way, I spent time with the family prior to the actual formal discussions to explain to them the rules of their engagement. I explained to them that everyone in the focus group, be it a dependent, child or servant in the home, held equal status to the mother and father of the house.

Sample and sampling techniques

The target respondents were Nollywood film enthusiasts. The selection criteria consisted of audiences of different ages and education from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Purposive, snowballing and quota sampling techniques were used to select participants. Punch (2009) explains that purposive sampling is used in a purposeful way with the focus being on gaining access to people with vital information on the subject. Bryman (2008) defines snowball sampling as a process that involves the researcher making initial contact with a small group of people who are relatively close to them, and who are probably familiar with the subject of the research. These people are used as a bridge or network to recruit further participants to the study. The other respondents are expected to possess the desired characteristics relevant to the investigation (Cohen et al., 2011).

Quota sampling is aimed at producing a sample that reflects a population in terms of the relative proportions of people in different categories, such as gender, ethnicity,

age group, socio-economic status, region of residence and combinations of these categories (Bryman, 2008). Seale (2004) attests that quota sampling involves selecting a given number of men and women, of different age groups, income brackets and occupational backgrounds to participate in focus groups that will probably reflect the interests of the wider national population.

I employed purposive sampling to select communities that are exposed to Nollywood films. These communities either had video parlours that operate on a commercial basis or households that owned televisions. I presented the six case study films to each of the communities involved which I proposed to be screened for two and a half weeks prior to our next meeting. Guided by the list of research questions, the discussions were based on the study's central theme exploring female representation in these films.

I used snowballing sampling to identify key contact people who then organised participants for the focus group discussions in their respective communities (Bryman, 2006). Most of these contacts were men or women who were popular among their peers in communities or social and professional groups. Before I approached these contact people, I had prior information about them from a friend or relative who identified the contact and subsequently recommended them to me. These contact people were charged with the task of approaching the known Nollywood film enthusiasts who met my set of criteria to partake in the focus group discussions. They were advised that the discussion would centre on the films they

watch in general, and in particular, the case study film titles I gave them to watch prior to our meetings.

Quota sampling was used to select the list of people to participate in each focus group discussion based on gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education, religion and other cultural factors. The aim was to have a focus group that is representative of the community. This approach ensured that participants were a fair representation of the population of Nollywood film audiences (see Seale, 2006).

Recruitment

As indicated earlier, I recruited from selected communities across Malawi. I considered several factors in my choice of the communities from which I formed my focus group. These factors included language, ethnicity, religion, culture, demography and politics. The contact persons in each community were used to recruit members from that community to participate in the study. Participants will be referred to as ‘respondents’ in most cases in this thesis. I gave clear criteria to the contact people regarding the individual participants to be recruited. The primary criterion for the selection was a reputation for having a passion for Nollywood films. Access to films in Malawi falls into various categories: those owning a television; those watching in a neighbour’s or friends’ home and those watching in commercial video parlours.

As stated previously, snowballing was used to recruit participants in the focus groups. This method allowed me to explore the networks of my primary contacts who share the same passion for Nollywood films (Cohen et al., 2011). I explained

the project and their expected contribution to the participants. They were told that they would be given six films in total to watch for the project, each one of them to be screened for a period of two and a half weeks, after which we would meet to discuss female representation at the end of the stipulated period of watching each of the films. Each focus group had an average of nine participants. The lowest number across the focus group was five and the highest was 21 in one focus group. I had advised the groups' team leaders to organise a minimum of five and a maximum of ten participants. There was an instance of one group registering four participants. However, in some groups, film enthusiasts 'gate-crashed' on the meeting day. Hence, it was practically and socially difficult to prevent them from participating. This did however create some problems in the management of responses during discussions. Those who gate-crashed had no prior informed idea of the day's central discussion. They did upset the pace of the proceedings. However, their participation added value to the discussion. In fact, they were the ones who spoke from the heart, and arguably, they were not pre-empted by my ideas.

The research proper was preceded by a pilot study which informed the organisation of the main field study a year later. In the following section, I shall discuss the specific ways in which the pilot study impacted on the research design and outcome. All the participants were fluent in Chichewa which was the language used in all the discussions.

SECTION THREE

FIELDWORK

Pilot Study

I carried out a pilot field study in Malawi between April and May 2012. During this time, I began the recruitment of the participants and research assistants. I had three research assistants. I formed 12 focus groups using snowballing, purposive and quota sampling (Punch, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011; Bryman, 2008). I used open-ended questions which were based on the research questions. The importance of conducting a pilot study cannot be overemphasised. Mason (2011) attests that a pilot study is essential in helping the researcher to plan and respond to strategic issues that may arise before the main exercise. Thus, during the pilot study, I formed the 12 focus groups and explored the films and this gave an opportunity to identify the issue of female representation. It is during this time that the case study films were identified by the participants. There were no specific films that were targeted this time around rather it was a period to explore the general knowledge or passion of the participants (potential) on Nollywood films. The exercise helped me in strategizing for the main study. Other than the data collection aspect, with the experience of a pilot study, I was able to successfully plan the resources required for the main fieldwork that included finances, means of transport, accommodation, meals, equipment and time.

The pilot field study exposed several strategic issues that were helpful in my main study. For instance, I learned how to present my research questions differently to different groups of people without having to anticipate offending them while

preserving the questions' meaning. During the pilot study, I detected some uneasiness among the participants in discussing certain gender related topics that apparently challenged their own cultural and religious teachings and practices. These included but are not limited to, Islamic teaching and gender relations; polygamy and gender relations; wife battering and gender relations; and female circumcision. Thus, during the main field study, I exercised caution in the way I handled issues that were drafted to trigger discussion among the participants. It should be noted that the issue of gender relations remains a controversial and highly sensitive issue among religious and cultural communities of Malawi. There was a risk that if such sensitive issues were handled carelessly it could have resulted in the local people withdrawing their participation. Therefore, during my main fieldwork, I avoided being perceived judgemental or seen taking sides or presenting myself as a moral authority to condemn or applaud some aspects of gender relations that favour men or women. In the end, I was satisfied that the pilot field study was essential and contributed to a successful main field study as I learned lessons which enabled me to develop a responsible, inclusive approach to the participants.

In terms of the operational aspect, I was involved in a car accident on the first day of my pilot field study in Malawi's commercial city, Blantyre in April 2012. Although no one involved in the accident was injured, the car was damaged beyond repair. I had to postpone my meetings for some days. However, I managed to successfully carry out my assignment as planned. I had to use public transport thereafter. Although inconvenient in terms of time management, using public transport was a blessing in disguise. It was cheaper and more importantly, it enabled participants

from poor backgrounds, particularly those from rural communities, to relate to me. In Malawi, owning or driving a vehicle is a symbol of affluence and visiting rural communities by car would have caused the participants to treat me as superior to them. This could have compromised their responses to my research questions.

Furthermore, most of the rural communities now have a negative attitude towards foreign based researchers. This is as a result of their exposure to local and international NGOs. It is reported that the NGO staff visit the communities to carry out baseline surveys or main field studies on developmental projects that subsequently never take place and the local participants often feel exploited by the developmental agents. They allege that the NGOs use the locals as a source of information without keeping their pledge of implementing the promised developmental initiatives. This experience has led to the people's unwillingness to participate in any form of social research. In this case, had I visited them by car I would have risked being shunned. I would, in such scenario, be viewed as one of the NGO agents that visit with the sole purpose of exploiting the local people.

The Main Study

The main study is a continuation of a chain of activities leading to the main fieldwork. I conducted the pilot fieldwork in April 2012. The main fieldwork was conducted between July and September 2013. During the pilot study I collected data from 12 focus groups which were later reduced to nine in the main fieldwork for strategic reasons that I will explain later in this chapter.

As Nollywood films are watched across all social divides that include urban semi-communities, semi-urban communities and rural communities, I adopted an inclusive approach to the selection of the participants in my research. Other social factors were also considered. These included the social, economic, political and religious background of the communities I was working in. As in the pilot fieldwork, the main fieldwork drew participants from all socio-economic groups: farmers, working class, business people, students among other social strands.

As religion remains one of the major factors influencing Malawian culture vis-à-vis gender relations in communities, I therefore incorporated it as one of the major considerations in deciding on which communities to include in focus group discussions. Malawi is a predominantly Christian state however it also has a significant Moslem population. The above named religions have a considerable impact on the cultural beliefs and practices of the locals. Gender and social relations beliefs and practices are partly influenced by these religious institutions especially in areas where they have dominant followers.

Research Questions

The research questions were premised on the main theme which is *the representation of women in Nollywood films*. Based on the case study of six films they were requested to watch, the respondents were asked to discuss their perspective of female portrayals in the films and the impact of these portrayals on the gender and social relations with their opposite sex counterparts. The films watched were: *Not With My Daughter* (2002), *The Pastor's Wife* (2009), *The Comforter* (2009), *Royal Fight* (2011), *Mr & Mrs* (2011) and *The Last Vote* (2002). The following research

questions guided the focus group discussions, although they were not posed to participants in this explicit form:

- What is the general/common genre featured in most of the Nollywood films?
- What factors account to Nollywood's popularity among its local viewers in countries other than Nigeria such as Malawi?
- In your opinion, does Nollywood offer an opportunity for cultural flow between one African country to another and how?
- In general, based on the majority of Nollywood films you have watched, in particular reference to the six case study film you have recently watched, how are women represented in the films in terms of their social relations with men in these films?
- To what extent do Nollywood films' overall representation of women characters serve as a model to Malawian audiences?
- Assuming Nollywood is an agent of cross border cultural flow on the continent, to what extent does the films offer an opportunity for the identification of African gender notions across the continent's national cultures?

Prior to carrying out the fieldwork, I watched a total of 104 Nollywood films out of which the participants in my pilot study selected six films as the case study material (see Appendix: 12). Participants were involved entirely in the selection of the case study films. The pilot study was instrumental in the choice of the case study films as participants had a well informed theoretical/ thematic approaches of the study. As a

matter of fact the time by which I introduced to them a variety of films as potential case study material, they had a clear idea of the discourse that would form effective and at the same time lively debate on the female representations in the selected films.

The dominant genre across the six case study films was romance or love (*Mr & Mrs 2011*, *Not With My Daughter 2002*, *The Pastor's Wife 2009*, *The Comforter 2009*). Other genres such as kinship characterise Nollywood films, for instance *Royal Fight (2011)*. However, my experience of watching and analysing Nollywood suggests that the issue of genre is complex in these films. It only requires one to watch a mixed selection of 20 films to conclude that there is an overlap of themes or genres within a single Nollywood film. It is only the action or horror element that is conspicuously missing in most Nollywood films.

The focus groups were nine. They were designed to comprise male and females. Eight focus groups were a combination of male and females and only one had all-males participants. It turned out to be difficult to have any female member in the group that turned out to be all-male groups. No theory so far could explain the factor behind women's unwillingness to participate in this particular (Nkhatabay) focus group. The groups were comprised of members of different social stand in their respective communities. There was also a fusion of age difference and education variations in order to excite all-rounded and informed responses.

During the focus groups, participants presented their views regarding the way women are represented in the films in general, and in particular, in the case study films. In some cases, as detailed in this thesis, heated debate ensued amongst the

discussants with competing views exchanged regarding the portrayal of women in the films in relation to Malawian gender notions. For instance, in one of the films, *Mr & Mrs*, discussants held divided opinions on the casting of a career woman, Linda, in the film. Others were of the view that the portrayal of Linda suggests an irresponsible woman who does not care about family life at all. They contended that this is an exaggeration of gender equality. However, some respondents indicated that they found Linda's behaviour acceptable. They argued that being a woman and a wife should not subject one to the confinement of the home doing household chores all the time.

The above exchange was valuable for me as a researcher. It was a clear demonstration that the discussants expressed independent views in their response to my inquiry. It alleviated my fears that my research questions I used to moderate the focus group discussions, probably did not influence them or encouraged them to come up with biases to deliberately satisfy my study assumptions.

The focus groups were formed across the communities and represented demographic, cultural, social, religious and political landscape of Malawi. Six of the nine focus groups comprised of male and female discussants. One focus group was made up of all-male discussants (Nkhatabay). The rest comprised male and female discussants. The age range among the groups was between 18 and 65 years old. There was a mixture of age range in five of these focus groups but less so in the remaining four focus groups. All the discussions were conducted in the local language, Chichewa.

The data was collected in two ways: sound digital recording via Sam-sung Note galaxy phone and occasional note taking using my note pad. Since the process of data collection from the focus group set-up demanded my divided attention by virtue of my role as a facilitator, note-taking in such scenarios was minimal. In addition, I had a Sony cassette recorder as a back-up recording device. The average recording and discussion time per session was between one and a half and two hours. The average number of participants in each focus group was nine, although as noted earlier, one group (Chikwawa) had 21 participants. I was present in all the focus group discussions.

Three focus groups had designated places and times to watch the films. These were Chikwawa, Mabulabo and Lunzu Focus Groups had designated place of watching and discussing the films. Two focus groups were formed from household family members who all share a passion for Nollywood films. They comprised four and seven participants, from Ntchewu and Mangochi focus groups respectively. Three focus groups watched and discussed films either in the home of one of the participants who own a television or in a commercial video parlour.

Lastly, one set of focus group discussants was a privileged one. These are the group who owned televisions. Members of this group preferred to watch the films in their own time and place. Some would watch the films in their homes or at their workplaces using a laptop or desktop computer. The group was mostly made up of working middle-class and relatively affluent business people. They only appeared when a meeting was scheduled to discuss the films at one focal point. I had to make

enough video copies for each of the films to ensure the case study films were easily accessed by all participants prior to the discussion date.

SECTION FOUR

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

There are various practical reasons why focus group was a chosen data collection method for this study. According to Krueger & Casey (2000), focus groups are an economical, fast, and efficient method for obtaining data from multiple participants and thereby potentially increasing the overall number of participants in a given qualitative study (Krueger, 2000). Further to this, focus groups created an enabling socially oriented environment for a researcher and the participants (ibid). In addition, to an individual participant, the sense of belonging to a group can increase their sense of cohesiveness (Peters, 1993) and help them to feel safe to share information (Morgan, 1996). Above all, the interactions that occur among the participants can yield important data (Morgan, 1988), can create the possibility for more spontaneous responses (Butler, 1996), and can provide a setting where participants can discuss personal problems and provide possible solutions (Duggleby, 2005).

I employed open-ended questions as a guide to focus group discussions. The discussions lasted between 90 minutes and 120 minutes (see Morgan, 1997) and consisted between 5 and 10 participants except Ntchewu Focus Group which had four participants (see Baumgartner, Strong, & Hensley, 2002). Such moderate size of participants was designed in order to serve two purposes: to include enough participants to yield diversity in information provided and at the same time not to

include too many participants because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences (see Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Focus groups met three times to discuss the films and in the process I was collecting the data (July-September, 2013). Multiple meetings allowed me to assess the extent to which the saturation of the data was reached. This this was evident when information occurred so repeatedly that it was clear to me that the collection of more data could have added no additional interpretive worth (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At least 83 Nollywood film enthusiasts participated in nine focus groups spread across Malawi. Majority of the participants were females 47 against males 36. The participants were purposively selected and comprised a mixture of ethnical, educational, religious, political, cultural, classical and social backgrounds (see appendix 13 for the demographic distribution of the participants).

I basically applied multiple sources of focus group data collection for my analysis. I used the actual text (what each participant stated during the focus group) and recorded using audiotapes, notes and items /events that I recalled during my data collection period (see Kruger, 1994). Both notes and recalled items were entered in my field notes (see chapter 6 (1). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) discuss various modes for analysing data: transcript-based, tape-based and noted-based. I employed tape-based analysis wherein I listened to the tape of the focus group and then created an abridged transcript (refer to appendix 3). This explains why the transcript is much shorter than would have been in the full transcript in a transcript-based analysis. Notwithstanding, this type of analysis proved helpful as it enabled me to focus on

the research question and only transcribe the portions that assisted in better understanding of the study interest. This approach was practical and effective to me in several ways. In the first place, I was involved in each and every meeting from the beginning and as such I had an idea of what each of the participants or a group came up with. Secondly, since I employed grounded theory as a data collection and analytical tool (see chapter four), the tape-based analysis offered the opportunity for me to verify /supplement or complement the materials of analysis that I already built up during the focus group meetings (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009:5) state that focus group data can arise from one of the following three types: individual data, group data, and/or group interaction data. Focus group theorists disagree as to the most appropriate units of analysis for focus group data to analyse. I used the group as the unit of analysis (Morgan, 1997). I coded the data and presented emergent themes. This approach to analysing focus group data was atheoretical (Stewart, 2007) and it discovered the major ideas and themes that emerged from the group discussions. Thus, the approach, served to generalise the findings from the small-sample of population I situated my study on. Thus, I based the analysis on the findings which emerged from the recurring systems of belief or explanations which represented thematic units. The next section therefore elaborates this approach in individual focus group discussions which will in turn bring out themes for discussions in chapters six to nine. The study employed multiple theoretical tools to analyse participants' responses to female representation in Nollywood films and the subsequent emergent themes following the analysis. For this purpose, various analytical tool were engaged such as grounded theory and other

semiotic theories that included but not limited to film dialogue theory (Kozloff, 2000), cultural theory (Hall, 1997), conversational theory (Sheldon, 1997), discourse analysis theories (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1999; Eggs and Slade, 1997; Foucault, 1984, Bourdieu, 1991; Gramsci, 1971) and feministic discourse theories (Rathzel, 1997).

Focus group discussions were conducted using open-ended questions as triggers. The research questions presented earlier in this chapter were used as a guide for the focus group discussions though not presented in such an academic fashion. Open-ended questions offered respondents an opportunity to express their perspectives as freely as they could. The central subject around which the focus group discussions revolved was the impact of Nollywood films on the audiences. Cresswel (2003) attests that open-ended questions allow respondents to answer from their own contextual view point rather than being limited by pre-structured questions.

The setting for the focus group discussions was informal and all participants had equal access to the discussion with no restriction on who may speak, how often or for how long. Further, people with physical and learning disabilities were included and were helped to participate by third parties. There were two cases of disabled participants across all the groups. One member had walking difficulties from Chikwawa Focus Groups. Another member from Lunzu Focus Group had speech difficulties. To ensure the independent response of participants, what they said during the discussions was not the result of a specified or guided effort from me in the build up to the discussions (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). It should be

noted nevertheless that some members of the same family were not comfortable expressing themselves in the presence of their relatives. The issues of relationship between spouses and extended family as noted in *Mrs & Mrs* and *Not With My Daughter* created tension within the groups in family revolved focus groups. Some of the families had members who were a husband and a wife, and some had members who were extended family members such as in-laws.

However, I made every effort to redress these issues. In the first place, I asked the family members to be as objective as possible and not to be personal with any view expressed by a family member. Further to this, to prevent some participants' tendency to dominate the discussion, ground rules were put in place at the onset of the meetings (Robson, 1993). For instance, participants were asked not to interrupt others whenever they were contributing to the discussion. Also, I agreed with the participants not to leave or enter the discussion unnecessarily to avoid disrupting the momentum of the group. Mobile phones were put on silent mode in order to avoid disturbing the discussions or interfering with the recording equipment. My role as a researcher was to facilitate or moderate the discussions. During the discussions I also made notes on participants' body language whenever they were talking or listening. I considered that body language, gestures and language or phrases signalled approval or disapproval of a view of a fellow discussant. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) emphasise that in qualitative research, each gesture, act or word is significant.

Robson (1993) suggests that for interviews to be effective, the researcher needs to exercise patience in listening to detailed information given by the respondent rather

than rushing him or her onto the next question. Hence, adopting Robson's approach, I listened to every detail from participants while at the same time following up on issues raised further to the main question under discussion. I asked straightforward questions which were as far as possible accurate and clear for the participants. Further, I avoided long double-barrelled, biased questions and jargon. This approach as far as possible ensured that I got the best from respondents. Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) state that a focus group-led data collection technique facilitates effective conversation analysis in social research, arguing that it invites the respondents to consider a range of issues, or talk freely about specific events. They argue that:

In these open-ended interviews, respondents may produce lengthy and (largely) monologic accounts, anecdotes and narratives. (ibid: 163)

Based on the reasons discussed in this section, the focus group discussion method was highly apt for my research purposes.

SECTION FIVE

DATA PROCESSING

Data Analysis

As stated in chapters one and three of the thesis, the study employs dialogue analysis as the main approach to analysing the films and focus group discussions. This is based on the fact that the films in question are predominantly melodrama and as such dialogue is the appropriate theory to use to interpret and analyse the discourse involved in the scenes that portray women's representation. Most melodramas involve more talking than actions and therefore this approach is closer to getting the desirable data analysis than other analytical tools. Kozloff (2000) states

Melodramas are marked not only by their style of dialogue, but by talkativeness. The drama of melodramas lies primarily in the development of interpersonal relationships- there are few, if any, scenes of silent physical action. On-screen time is devoted to discussing the characters' feelings or decisions-melodramas convey the sense of a "debating society" where the action lies in the thrashing out of contesting viewpoints, or even in philosophical discussions of the nature of love or duty. And since physical movement – in the sense of chases on horseback, machine-gun shoot –outs, and even slapstick pratfalls- is generally denied, these films' excitement lies in their dialogue exchanges, which recurrently enact a suspenseful jockeying for power. (241-242)

Thus, film dialogues analysis stands out as the primary analytical tool for the melodramatic Nollywood films.

Other than film dialogue analysis, other analytical tools include discourse analysis and cultural analysis theories. In analysing the discourse in the context of

participants' responses, I paid close attention to language; that is how the gender narratives portrayed in films were being interpreted and conceived by the participants. Therefore, attention to how the respondents analysed the films in their local languages and the social and cultural implication of its meaning is essential. Coyle (1993) suggests that researchers need to be highly sensitive to the nuances of language. Thus, discourse analysis enabled me to explore how respondents use languages to construct identities and reveal their emotions and understanding. It also helped me to examine how different meanings are constructed through texts (Cohen et al., 2011).

Discourse analysis also focuses on issues of power, domination and the constructions and reproduction of power in texts and conversations, according to Fairclough (2001). He describes discourse as a social practice in which he argues that language "is a part of society, and not somehow external to it" (18). He further posits that language is "a socially conditioned process, condition that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society" (19). He contends that whenever people speak, listen or write, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects.

The data was analysed inductively, using a "bottom-up" approach, employing 'categorical indexing' and 'cross-sectional analyses' as suggested in Punch (2009). The categorical indexing involves using headings, sub-headings and themes that emerge from the data to classify and organise the data into meaningful group labels. The cross-sectional analyses and data derived from the group participants were compared and contrasted to discover explanatory patterns among the individuals and

groups as discussed in Mason (2004). As Prior (2011) indicates, such a procedure highlighted what was important and what was absent in the responses. It also helped me to re-examine the text to discover intentions, functions and consequences of the discourse, in what May terms a 'vocabulary of motives' as an important aspect of analysis (2011:140). This involves reasons people give for performing certain actions in certain situations and this approach helped me to look at why respondents reacted differently to films (see Cohen et al., 2011).

The analyses were carried out manually through listening to the voice recording and this helped me to interact personally with the data. Cohen et al. (2011), Flick (2009) and Gibbs (2007) are all critical of the use of computer assisted techniques in social science research. They argue that using computer assisted techniques introduces the possibility of limiting flexibility and creating a distance between researcher and data. They further contend that a computer assisted approach to analysing data risks overlooking some important texts. The focus group discussions were firstly fully transcribed. I personally did the transcription, which enabled me to become even more familiar with the data.

The use of discourse analysis via film dialogue helped me to effectively explore the transcribed data to identify key words, phrases, ideas and themes which were grouped together using a coding system. I also looked at how the words, phrases and theories were presented and the frequency with which they were occurring (Ritchie et al., 2003). Wilkinson (2011) indicates that the procedure generates a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary of the data. In analysing the data, I also

emphasised how language is used by respondents. Braun and Clarke (2013) indicate that researchers need to be highly sensitive to the nuances of language.

SECTION SIX

CHALLENGES

Focus

During the field trip I encountered a number of challenges. Thematically, the first two films, *Not With My Daughter* (2002) and *Royal Fight* (2011) were the first to be discussed. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, I extensively briefed participants about the project and their involvement. For most parts of the exercise and for most discussions across the focus groups, participants contributed effectively and there was evidence of progress.

However, this does not rule out instances where a few respondents lost focus or appeared disinterested which derailed the progress of the groups whilst I was trying to keep everyone involved. Of particular note are the participants who appeared to lose track of the central theme that helped to introduce issues that were only remotely connected with the primary subject. In a way, this divergence turned out to be a blessing in disguise as some emerging issues paved the way to new insights and led to several probing questions from my side. This unanticipated material therefore made the study even more revealing as it somehow opened up my thoughts to wider aspects bordering my study and it further demonstrates the potential benefits of this methodology.

Perhaps the best experience was how much I was overwhelmed by participants' passion for Nollywood films. This is captured in chapter five of the thesis with detailed accounts of participants' responses suggesting that Nollywood is the

premier viewing choice among film audiences of all ages in Malawi. There are many explanations for this popularity. Most respondents indicated that they have a passion for Nollywood films because they introduce issues or discourses that have parallels with their Malawian experience. I did not expect the magnitude of loyalty that Nollywood commands in both the rural and urban population of Malawi. It is little wonder that this excitement among the new generation of film audiences produced lively discussions on many occasions.

Resources

Another challenge has been funding and time constraints. The study necessitated high involvement in terms of commitment and resources. After the experience of the 2012 pilot field trip was shared with my supervisors, I was advised not to engage research assistants, who had helped me collect preliminary data for this purpose. They stressed this requirement and the need for me to do everything independently on my own. This proved to be beneficial to me as I was able to follow every discussion fully without having to rely on others to collect the data for me. It also improved my interactions and relationship with participants as I had organised **three meetings** with each focus group. The first meeting involved introducing the participants to the films. This was followed by subsequent trips to discuss the films every four weeks to discuss two films they had watched of the six case study material.

However, this approach presented its own challenges. With such extensive travelling, I needed more financial resources for travel, accommodation and upkeep throughout the period when I was visiting the communities and focus group

participants. As some participants had to travel from far away, this created the challenges of taking care of their lunch and transport. It must be acknowledged that the responsibility to cater for the food and transport needs of the participants fell on me, but I was operating on a very tight budget, so this was a difficult challenge.

NGOs phenomenon

Other than resources and time constraints, the assignment presented the usual challenges regarding expectations among some participants. As the research involved both urban and rural populations, there was a mixed expectation among the participants and potential participants. The rural participants proved a much greater problem than their urban counterparts. Some participants were sceptical of my study and some believed I was using them for my own financial gain. As indicated earlier on in this chapter, there are reported allegations against the practice of some non-governmental organisations who exploit the rural communities for financial gain. These organisations are reportedly local but with foreign connections. It is alleged that they use information from the people, and take their photographs to send to their prospective donors and once they obtain funding, they abandon the communities. This explains the acrimony between the local NGOs and the rural communities.

Such experiences affected their perception of my project. As a foreign based scholar with a perceived affiliation with Western institutions, I was regarded as one of the potential exploiters. Despite a clear statement on my mission and true identity regarding my position as a truly academic researcher, few rural communities trusted my intentions. Nevertheless, I was still given the opportunity to collect data, although with caution. This prevented me taking video clips or pictures of the

participants. However, they did agree for the focus groups to be recorded for my use and also for the credibility of the whole exercise.

Ethical dilemma

The other challenge was the last minute withdrawal of some of the targeted participants. As I stated earlier on, some participants had unrealistic expectations regarding their participation in the project; some had hoped for some financial incentives and others had hoped for other material incentives from me. As a result of insufficient funding I could not afford to offer any incentives and nor would it have been appropriate, as it stood to undermine the objectivity of the study.

However, as stated earlier in this section, I met my standard obligation of taking care of the expenses of participants as a way of demonstrating my gratitude for their time and effort to my cause. I provided meals where and when possible and reimbursed transport expenses where and when required. I also provided refreshments to every participant in every focus group discussion throughout the entire fieldwork. This I did in accordance with the acceptable culture of focus group research and the management of participants. However, the manner in which some members of the focus groups demanded gifts from me made me uncomfortable and I lost confidence in their commitment to my project. I doubted if the information I would collect from them would be their objective expression or influenced by lack of incentives. I refused to be led by their expectations and even if I had had the necessary resources, I would have been unwilling to comply with their demands. Arguably, I faced an ethical dilemma.

Nevertheless, I still encouraged them to come forward to cooperate as I could still offer them the same treatment I was extending to other participants. But the key members insisted on being very uncooperative and frustrated my progress. Every time we arranged a visit, I would get last minute cancellations of the meeting. The interactions I had with some of the members within this particular group revealed that they were disappointed with the first meeting because I offered them nothing other than refreshments. This was a semi-urban focus group. Ironically, all members in this group were from a relatively privileged background: some were middle working class and fairly well-educated individuals. The meetings never took place and this marked the technical withdrawal of the group.

However, this was not problematic and did not affect the quality of data I collected and the outcome of my study, as the information I obtained from the neighbouring focus group was valuable. The participants in this other group belong to the same catchment area and members share more or less the same social and cultural backgrounds as the group that withdrew.

Data collection

There was a significant challenge regarding data collection. It was agreed with my supervisory team to record the discussions and thus enable me go over the recordings critically and make a fair and comprehensive analysis of the data back in the UK. I also needed the recordings for the credibility of the findings. As I had hired no research assistant, I had to do everything alone. I recorded the discussions digitally using a Sum-sung Note Galaxy phone. I also had a back-up using an old version of a Sony cassette recorder. Further, I took field notes alongside the

discussions. At the same time, I had the critical role of leading the proceedings; guiding the participants where necessary in an effort to focus the discussions. The role of being a moderator was never easy as I also had to read the body language of the individual respondents as this also helped me to make an effective discourse analysis of the interactions.

However, the challenges discussed in this section were overshadowed by the progress made in my fieldwork. I had active and enthusiastic participants who were committed to the cause with passion in the remaining nine focus groups. I had organised focus group people who coordinated the meetings and case study films professionally. Above all, I never missed meeting, and in most cases the turn-out was overwhelming as more people were seen forcing their way into the focus group meetings. The most significant result of all is that I collected data from all the nine focus groups without fail. The fact that the focus groups were a fair representation of the Malawi's social, cultural, economic, political and educational divide supports my claim with regard to the credibility of the findings.

Data Processing

So far, the available scholarship could not provide the best model for my data analysis. My study dealt with two types of data: film and focus group. Film data provided the basis for focus group discussion and the focus group discussion constituted the primary data for the study. The available literature could not provide a model of such approach and this presented a challenge in processing the data. However, I adopted and employed semiotic and film analytical tools to come up with a framework that informed the analysis of both types of data. The next chapter

therefore contains data analysis. The data analysis will involve the processing of film text data from case study videos and focus group data. The latter constitute primary source of data.

PART III

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

ANALYSING DATA FROM THE FILMS AND FOCUS GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

This study adopted qualitative method in collecting its data. Basically, the research used two approaches: film analysis and audience analysis. The former helped the researcher to explore for himself and develop a critical benchmark in assessing representation in Nollywood films. Around 104 films were viewed and analysed for this purpose. This approach further aided the researcher in analysing the responses of the participating audiences, which was the second approach.

This Part and chapter therefore contains the data analysis. It discusses two types of data: the film dialogue and focus group discussions and is therefore divided into two sections to reflect this fact. The first section employs Kozloff Film Dialogue Theory to analyse the discourse in the film texts. The selection of Kozloff is based on the rationale that she focuses on the interpretation of melodrama films which is the similar pattern of this study. She argues that dialogue is the central component of melodrama films as they have less actions and are effectively predominantly full of talkativeness.

The second section presents and analyses data from the focus group discussions. The study organises the data from the focus groups into themes and sub-themes and uses discourse and other, semiotic analytical tools to analyse the focus group data. As participants' responses constitute the core of the study, a discussion of the findings emerging from the focus groups will be covered in detail in chapters six, seven, eight and nine of the thesis.

SECTION ONE

FILM DIALOGUE ANALYSIS

ADOPTION OF KOZLOFF'S FILM DIALOGUE THEORY TO

ANALYSING DATA FROM THE FILM TEXTS

As a social semiotist, Kozloff (2000: 39) states that “the dialogue paves the way for us to understand the visuals, repeats their information for emphasis, interprets what is shown, and explains what cannot be communicated visually”, she adds, “dialogue is the preeminent means of communicating to the viewer story events that took place before the time period pictured on screen”. Kozloff’s film dialogue theory illuminates film discourse on three levels: the dialogue between or among the characters, the dialogue of individual character to themselves, and lastly the dialogue where the character addresses the audience (Kozloff, 2000). As stated earlier in this chapter, this study adopted Kozloff’s approach owing to the fact that the films under investigation were predominantly melodramatic. As the case study films are dialogic in their presentation, Kozloff’s model would help in interpreting responses to the dialogic focusing on female representation. Further to the above rationale, participating audiences discussed the female representation in focus groups, which, was also in a dialogical format. Therefore, the model is effective for both the melodramatic format of the films involved, on one hand, and the discussion of the films in a group by the participants which was dialogic, on the other hand.

The analysis of the film dialogue in the next section portrays the dominance of male characters over females. This could be said to reflect the situation in the real world,

and arguably reveals women as victims of sexual, class, gender, social, religious, cultural, intellectual and political stereotypes. The films' dialogues therefore suggest cases of male dominance, abuse, patriarchy, exploitation, insensitiveness, chauvinism, pride, egocentric and intolerance at the expense of female member of society. However, the films' dialogues present openings which demonstrate the extent to which women, who are exposed to sexual and gender stereotypes, could model on female characters in the films facing similar situations and learn how to challenge the status quo and make their voice heard as demonstrated in p.214 onwards (see Lazar, 2005).

MAIN ISSUES EMERGING FROM FILM DIALOGUES ANALYSIS

PATRIARCHAL MALE DOMINATION

A. Mr & Mrs (2011)

Film dialogue between Kenneth and Susan: the portrayal of women's oppression based on sex, gender and class stereotyping

In following the dialogue between the above two main characters in the film, it is evident to a viewer that the male character, Kenneth, dominates over the female character, Susan, in most of the scenes. Through the dialogue, a viewer appreciates that the male domination results in Susan being hurt emotionally. Her physical outlook reflects her poor state of mind as a result of her subjugation. The following extracts of dialogue and others to follow will give an idea of the social gap between the couple:

Kenneth: Is food not ready?

Susan: Darling today was hectic, I had to do the monthly shopping and then I had to do the laundry and then prepare the food. I woke up at 4am. I soaked the beans. I washed them and then I made moi moi 25 minutes ago. I made eforiro; pounded the stuff myself and it was made 5 minutes ago. There is your fruit punch made from it.

Kenneth: Just get my food. I don't get it. I make sure I provide everything we need as a family. You don't work. What's so difficult in being a housewife?

From the dialogue above, it is clear that Susan makes an effort to address the husband in a very informal and intimate way “darling” as compared to Kenneth who apparently ignores this lovely gesture from his wife and is instead demanding food. Later, when Susan starts bringing the juice to the table, there is a shock response from Kenneth who insists that he wants mango juice not the one being served. When Susan tries to explain that mango fruits are out of season, she is demeaned further:

Kenneth: I don't bloody care. Get this thing off my table. Now! (screaming and Susan looks very shocked) Do I have to remind you that Ken Abbah the Managing Director of Hills Oil and Gas does not eat stale food? Stop whining madam wife. There are a thousand and one women out there who would want to be called Mrs. Abbah.

The film further shows a dialogue which depicts Susan as an object of Kenneth's sexual satisfaction. The film is very clear that Kenneth treats sex with Susan as a need to be satisfied and as a ritual that she has to oblige. It is far from being an expression of love and mutual consent between them. Susan looks unwilling, citing tiredness, but Kenneth ignores her:

Kenneth: The role as my wife does not end in the kitchen, you know? You know what, let's go to bed, you are still my wife.

Kenneth's attitude towards Susan demonstrates the extent to which the plot unearths women's subjugation socially in terms of class and sex. Kenneth does not appreciate her efforts to maintain their home and ridicules her that she is just a housewife. He puts it in plain language that being a housewife is a simple task. He reminds Susan that he is important as he is the sole breadwinner in the house. Kenneth is shown treating Susan as an object of sexual satisfaction rather than a partner. Kenneth obliges Susan to go to bed with him as her duty to him. In this way, sex is reduced to food and is not a symbol of love but merely of a male's sexual needs. Whenever Susan complains, Kenneth rebukes her and reminds her of her poor family background. In doing so, Kenneth tries to legitimise his domination over Susan.

Susan: Why do you torment me Ken?

Kenneth: Your nagging is becoming unbearable, honestly. Why are you such an ungrateful Susan, what more do you want? You now talk back at me?

Susan: I...mean why??.... (Kenneth cuts her off)

Whenever Susan tries to make her point clear to Kenneth, she is interrupted as the above dialogue demonstrates. This sort of domination is salient in the first scenes of the film which demonstrates the notion of Susan's subjugation. This confirms Kozloff (2000)'s observation that women have not been judged on the grounds of whether they talk more than men, but whether they talk more than silent women. Thus she remarks: - "...When silence is the desired state for women...then any talk in which a woman engages can be too much" (13).

Further to the above trait of domineering a woman to an extent of subjugating her to silence, Kenneth is shown subjecting Susan based on class stereotypes. Kenneth is shown ridiculing Susan poor background. It is clear that class stereotype is the overriding factor for Susan's oppression other than sex or gender in these scenes. In the dialogue to follow, Kenneth cites Susan's poor family background as a reason for his filing for a divorce.

Kenneth: Take this scenario for instance, meet Mr. Williams, the son of the Nigerian Ambassador to the US and his wife, the daughter of the Senate President.....and meet Kenneth Abbah and his wife....daughter of who? A washer-man?

The dialogue above portrays Kenneth as class conscious, pompous, arrogant and ostentatious man. In the same dialogue with the lawyer, it further suggests that social marginalisation is another issue that Kenneth subjects Susan to:

Kenneth: She wants to socialise. Come on. I won't have it, you know how women are? They would have a negative influence on her. And most women who do these things rebel against their husbands and considering my social and political status, I can't have it, it will be embarrassing.

The expressions of Susan below highlights key issues that she suffers from as a result of sexual, gender and classical stereotyping at the hands of her husband.

Susan: Just because I am tired of being a slave in my own home. Just because I have lost my self-esteem... Just because I am no longer the woman I used to be. Look at me, look at my hair, I'm unkempt. We were never like this Ken before your family.....Was I like this before your father owned oil blocks. I want to be happy Ken, I want to be called your wife in public not stuck in the kitchen like a slave. Ken, I have lost my pride, I've lost my self-esteem.

When Susan further challenges Kenneth:

Susan: Can you imagine me a lawyer in your kitchen?

The husband is arrogant:

Kenneth: Yes, (your Master's Degree) courtesy to my family who sent you abroad for your Masters programme. Where was your wretched family? Since you are no longer happy, you are not happy with my family's progress, I will speak to my lawyer tomorrow, so I can give you your liberty.

Having presented the dialogues between Kenneth and Susan in *Mr & Mrs (2011)*, the next film presents dialogue between Hussein and his wife Adanma. The film gives an account of the couple's social relations. It further makes an attempt to portray the extent to which male patriarchal dominance is socially construed in religious cultured communities. Thus, the film demonstrates how religion lays a fertile ground for sex and gender induced stereotyping in women.

B. Not With My Daughter (2002)

Film dialogue between Hussein and Adanma: the portrayal of women's oppression as a result of sex, gender and religious stereotypes

As in the exchanges between Susan and Kenneth in *Mr & Mrs above*, the dialogue between Hussein and Adanma portrays women's oppression centred on sex and gender stereotypes in a family and community. While *Mr & Mrs* portrays class as an issue in women's domination, *Not With My Daughter* portrays a culture of suppression that is religious induced. Just like Kenneth, the dialogue between Hussein and Adanma portrays the husband as controlling, manipulative, arrogant, selfish, deceitful, untrustworthy, an adulterer and disrespectful of the wife's culture, religious convictions and feelings.

For instance, when Adanma went outside the compound to the nearest trading centre, Hussein is shown moving around the compound and impatiently keeping his eyes on guard towards the entry gate to the compound. When his wife returns, he confronts her and the dialogue that ensues underlines the notion of an abusive man, who is a control freak.

Hussein: You shameless woman, where are you coming from. In this house, in this house, listen to me very carefully, I am the master, and my words are final. Let me never hear again that you walk out of this house without my permission or else I'll deal with you.....Bastard wayward woman.

In a fight that ensues between Hussein and Adanma, the woman complains bitterly of Hussein's second wife, Khadjat, but Hussein ignores her:

Hussein: Ada, shut up! Stop talking to me like that. I divorce you, I divorce you, and I divorce you

Hussein starts battering Adanma and a fight breaks out. In the process, Adanma attacks Hussein's second wife, Khadjat. Hussein shouts at Adanma and declares the end of their marriage by telling her three times that she is divorced as indicated in the extract above. According to Islamic Law, a husband can, at will, divorce a wife by proclaiming the words "I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you". Hussein does this to Adanma and according to his family and community, this marriage is over. Adanma later challenges the divorce on the ground that their marriage is not based on Islamic law but rather on civil law.

The dialogue further exposes the growing gap in communication and social relations between the two partners due to differences in cultural ideologies owing to their

differences in religious beliefs. Adanma is a Christian from Lagos and Hussein is a Moslem from the north. They were brought up in different religious and cultural perspectives that are more often than not in conflict with each other. There is a legacy of rivalry between Hussein's people, the Hausa, and Adanma's people, the Igbo, that dates back to time immemorial. Inter-marriages between these two ethnic groups have rarely worked and the couple in this film are no exception. There are instances that made this marriage difficult.

For instance, encouraged by his family, Hussein took a second wife, 14 year old Khadja. Hussein's family are not impressed with Adanma and this is largely due to the fact that she is an Igbo and a non-Moslem whom they are constantly referring as "infidel" implying "impure or outcast". The dialogues involving Hussein, Adanma and Hussein's people that include his mother and sister portray the never ending fight between the wife and her in-laws. Adanma appears arrogant and too independent to be dictated to. When news of Hussein's second wife is confirmed to her, she refuses to accept it and accuses Hussein of being a cheat and untrustworthy.

According to Islam, a man is permitted to marry up to four wives if he is able to take care of them all. However Adanma dismisses this reality and tells Hussein's people that her husband had promised her he would not marry another woman when they first started dating. This is one of the major sources of conflict in the couples' family. Adanma appears to be portrayed as a victim of this cultural and religious tradition in this Moslem community. Adanma goes to Hussein's uncle, (Kawu) to complain about his 'cheating' with another woman, Khadija. To her

disappointment, Hussein's uncle challenges her with a defence that has its basis in Islamic law. The following dialogue between Adanma and Kawu, serves as evidence of Adanma's 'subjugation' to her husband's customary practices that are rooted in Islamic teaching:

Hussein's uncle (Kawu): Is it news to you that a Moslem is allowed four wives?

Adanma: He promised me that he is not going to have another woman.

Hussein's uncle to Hussein: Is what Jamilah (Adanma) is telling us true Hussein?

Hussein (hesitant): No, uncle. It is not true. I was only fulfilling my duties as a man to Khadijat.

Adanma (furious): I know you are a cheater and a deceiver, Hussein, you also lie?

Due to their differences in religious beliefs, the couple have further issues over how their daughter should be raised. Hussein and his people demand that she be raised in the Islamic way and send her to a Koran school. Hussein's people have renamed the child, formerly Khem, with an Islamic name, Amina. Both Adanma and her daughter have their names changed to Islamic names as soon as they entered the husband's family compound. Adanma is renamed Jamilah. The new names are imposed on them. In the scene, Adanma insists that the daughter is sent to a secular school as she does not value the Islamic school. A fight breaks out between her and her mother-in-law who tries to keep the child away from her mother. Adanma snatches the child from Hussein's mother and subsequently bans her husband's relatives from contacting her daughter. This signals another major source of conflict in the family.

Adanma faces oppression from Hussein and his people because she is a woman and she appears to hold low opinion of their culture. As a matter of fact, Hussein's culture and religion arguably perceive women as inferior to men. The Koran instructs Moslem women to be submissive to their husbands.

Throughout the film, dialogues in most scenes portray a discourse of Adanma's oppression as a result of sex, gender, religious and cultural stereotypes. Adanma is shown in violent or confrontational dialogue with Hussein, and she ends up crying and abused by him and his people. Adanma's dialogue with herself is portrayed to a viewer and signifies overwhelming evidence of her oppression due to male dominance and the culture and religion she finds herself in conflict with.

The above sets of dialogue that Adanma recalls suggest the sacrifices Adanma made to marry Hussein. Now she feels betrayed and all of it due to the fact that she is a woman. The culture and religion of Hussein's community do not allow a woman to have equal power relations with a man in almost every aspect of their life. Adanma, having born and brought up in a different community where gender and social relations are arguably not as far apart as her new home, finds it unbearable. It is clear from the portrayal of tears that her dreams are shattered. Adanma recalls the advice she got from her uncle and sister who opposed her relationship with Hussein based on their religious and cultural differences. Adanma had wanted to prove to them that she belonged to a different class of generation where love matters more than religious and cultural bounds. She once boasted of wanting to transcend such social barriers. However, this was another example of failing intercultural marriages like

the case of *Romeo and Juliet* in Shakespeare, a couple who also wanted to transcend family/ ethnical ideological boundaries and were focused to unite the two warring parties only ending up in disaster.

To collaborate the story of *Romeo and Juliet* based on Nigerian experience of intercultural marriages, Ugochukwu's analysed the film *Love in Vendetta* (2014). In *Love in Vendetta* the girl is a Muslim Hausa from the north and the boy is Christian Igbo from the South of Nigeria. This factor brought in an inherited enmity between their families and despite their insistence, their marriage nearly failed. The story of Adanma and Hussein therefore falls within the similar pattern where religious and cultural beliefs play a critical role in the failure of relationships between the young people.

C. Royal Fight (2011)

Dialogue between Dubem and the royalties: a portrayal of sexual, gender and culture driven domination of women

As in *Mr & Mrs* and *Not With My Daughter*, this film's dialogue is dominated by the portrayal of women's oppression rooted in sex and gender stereotypes in a community. Beyond that, arguably, the dialogue suggests structural oppression of women in a cultural community that hold royalty or kinship in high regard. Dubem is the central character of such dialogue in this film. She is married to a prince named Ikenna of Dubra Kingdom. The prince later succeeds his father as king and Dubem becomes the queen. The couple spends six years without having a child and pressure is on them to produce a child who would guarantee the continuity of the

crown. Elders of the king's council are leading those pressuring the young king to have a child.

Despite her love for and support of her daughter-in-law, the Queen mother advises the son to find a second wife to give him a child. The youthful king succumbs to pressure and he begins abusing his wife out of frustration. Other than being a shared responsibility, it is the woman who shoulders the blame for childless condition in the home. She is ridiculed by some young members of the royal family, especially Samara, the wife of Ikenna's adopted brother, Chinedu. The young queen faces humiliation as the king moves to bring a new wife into the royal household. The following dialogue underlines the discourse of barrenness or childlessness as an issue that subjects women to oppression and all forms of abuse in a typical African society.

Ikenna: Give me a child! Do I look like I care? I have fulfilled my obligation as a husband, you fulfil yours. You, you give me a child otherwise you will dance to my tune.

When Dubem informed her husband of her intention to divorce upon realising that he has brought in a new wife, the king refuses to grant her wish and instead apologised to her and reasoned with her to stay.

Ikenna: My Queen I am sorry, I didn't have the courage to talk to you, there are so many things that you do not understand. I did what I did to protect the crown, our marriage and the kingdom. I love you

Dubem: Look at me (addressing Ikenna). You went to the city, with less than two weeks, you came back with a new wife. Is that saving our marriage? I want a divorce. My mind is made up. Look

around you, my bags are packed. You fulfilled your part as a husband, I couldn't fulfil mine. If I continue living here, I will be the unhappiest woman on earth. Please, let me go.

Ikenna: Dubem, if you leave me, I will be the worst king ever. My Queen, you're the only one that makes me feel original, original my dear. I beg you to forgive me, forgive me. All I ask of you is time and patience, then you will understand why I did what I did.

The dialogue involving Dubem highlights how the scenes in this film expose society's bias in the way it perceives women's gender and sex roles in a family. The dialogue unveils discriminatory perceptions of women as opposed to their male counterparts. Several observations in the plot's dialogue can help to elaborate on the sexual and gender biases claim. Firstly, it is the woman who is blamed for being childless. This is unfair as child bearing is the joint responsibility of a man and a woman. Secondly, the argument that the elders and Ikenna put forward of desperately wanting a child is for the purpose of succession to his crown. Though implicit, the dialogue is clear about the sex status of the child expected of the couple: male. The elders, the young king and the queen mother's discourse imply a boy and there is no suggestion of imagining the child to be a girl. It further pressurises Dubem to produce a male heir. The discourse of male heir therefore degrades the status of women as they are reduced to second class members of society.

Thirdly, the dialogue involving Dubem, the Queen Mother and the witch doctor reveals that Dubem had her womb removed by an elder woman in her village. Dubem was previously involved with a son of the elder woman. The son sexually harassed Dubem and in return, Dubem reported him to the authorities and he ran away from the village since then. In retaliation, the boy's mother used magic to

remove Dubem's womb thereby making her barren. In this dialogue, Dubem is a victim of a male action just because she is a woman. Because barrenness is an issue in her society, Dubem suffers humiliation. The film highlights the fact that women are victims of cultural, social and sexual stereotypes owing to their sex. It is only because they are women, as the film dialogue involving Dubem suggests, they are vulnerable to various sorts of oppression or sex and gender based suppression.

The witch: You are now the king's wife. You, you, you were troublesome. Now, you want my forgiveness. Bring my son back to me, and then I will give you back your womb.

With the help of a witch doctor, the old woman's son is found and Dubem's womb is intact again. Later in the film, Dubem gets pregnant and gives birth to a baby boy, an act which apparently answers the question of kinship succession.

After discussing the dialogue involving Dubem in the context of royal family and the sort of sex and gender generated stereotype from cultural perspective, the next discussion is centred on a dialogue between a young woman from poor family background and her fiancé' from a rich family. The woman lost her parents. The dialogue portrays another case study of class induced gender and sex stereotyping.

D. The Comforter (2009)

Dialogue between Amarachi and Henry's family: portrayal of sex, gender and class stereotypes

Similar to the plots discussed in the previous films, this film establishes the extent to which sex, gender and class stereotypes play a big impact on informing audiences'

perception of women. This film's dialogue highlights that on top of sex stereotype as the case of the character Dubem in *The Royal Fight*. In her earlier years, Amarachi was trying to protect herself from a boy friend who was on the verge of raping her. In the process, the boy died and his family places the blame on Amarachi. Ten years later, when Amarachi finds a new boyfriend, Henry and becomes engaged, her fiancé's aunt (Rose) appears upon learning the news deliberately misleads the boy's family. She alleges that Amarachi is a murderer who killed her son. The following dialogue contains discourses that leave women vulnerable to exploitation:

Aunt Rose: She is the devil that murdered my son only ten years ago. Henry, Henry, listen, whatever that witch fed you is destroying you and you're allowing it to. She is a witch, she is a soulless murderer. It's the witch at work again

In reaction to this, Amarachi confesses everything to Henry regarding the incident that led to the death of his cousin when she was much younger. Amarachi tells Henry that Aunt Rose's son who then was a boyfriend wanted to rape her, in defence she fought back and in the process the boy died. Instead of explaining to Henry's family both sides of the story, the aunt deliberately chooses to be selective in her presentation of the fact. She portrays Amarachi as an undeserving young lady in every respect. Instead of investigating the allegation independently and objectively, Henry's parents choose to believe the aunt's story. However, things change for the worse for Amarachi; Henry at first sides with her only to succumb to family pressure.

(Henry to Amarachi): Amarachi, please, I can't let you go, I love you, please be with me.

(Henry to his parents): If you want me alive, you have to allow me to marry Amarachi. Amarachi is not a witch. I do not denounce Amarachi till the day I die.

As the case of Susan in *Mr & Mrs*, the dialogues between Henry and his parents indicate that class stereotype is another dominating factor that subjects Amarachi to oppression as evidenced in the following dialogue:

(Henry to his parents): Is it because she is an orphan and she is not our blood? Where is our sense of justice, all of you? You killed her both of you.

As can be deduced from the last line of dialogue, Amarachi is driven to suicide out of frustration and Henry accuses his parents of being responsible for this. Thus, from the dialogues in this film, it can be concluded that Amarachi is a victim of sex, gender and class stereotypes. She is never given an opportunity to defend herself due to the perceived superior power relations of her accusers (Henry and his parents). It is towards the end when she saved the life of Aunt Rose as an anonymous blood donor that the family believe in her. Further, it had to take Aunt Rose to wake up from her coma to confess her misleading actions against Amarachi.

The next discussion is centred on a dialogue between Sister Shade, a wife to Pastor James, and the community. The discourse exposes how women's actions and attitudes land them in a collision course with their cultural community. Sister Shade leads independent and liberal lifestyle and this does not go down well with fellow women in the community she is in. She receives bad reception more in fellow women than men.

E. Pastor's Wife (2009)
Dialogue on Sister Shade: Portrayal of culturally induced women's oppression
by fellow women

Unlike the rest of the films analysed in this chapter, this plot presents a unique but obvious sort of oppression: woman versus woman. Religion, culture and customary practices are at the centre of this woman to woman marginalisation. In this plot, Sister Shade is the wife of the presiding pastor of a village church. The couple lived in USA for long period of time. Pastor James was converted whilst in USA and continued his studies to become a Church minister in the USA before moving back home to continue with his pastoral work. Pastor James is followed by his wife, Sister Shade. Shade proves an embarrassment to the family and his entire congregation. She increasingly becomes very unpopular in the eyes of the public. This film's portrayal exposes oppression of women by fellow women as detailed below:

Dialogue between Church/ village women and Sister Shade:

Church Woman: Sister Shade, stop all this nonsense. I told you that this sister will not bring anything but trouble. You think you're in America- err! No wonder you shamelessly expose your body anyhow. Or do you want to corrupt our little girls? What is it about her? She goes about naked in the village. As far as I am concerned that woman is a curse to the village. Just imagine a pastor's wife, who cannot cover her body and cannot even pray. This is a church house not a night club.

Village tuck shop sales lady: It is just that I am not used to a pastor's wife drinking. No, I don't sell cigarettes, I am a Christian.

Village women 1: Imagine that an African woman like myself behaving more like an American than the Americans themselves. How can a man as good as the pastor marry such a wayward

woman? Pastor James deserves something better than that woman-oh!

Village woman 2: That Shade of a woman, she is heading for trouble-oh! This village will not contain sister Shade, it will not contain her. You must do something, you must do something oh!

The dialogue above raises a series of pertinent issues regarding Sister Shade's portrayal in considering the sex and gender roles in the African communities. First and foremost is the question of dressing style. Most women from the community in which Sister Shade lives express embarrassment about Sister Shade's way of dressing. They accuse her of being possessed with evil spirits. Added to this, Sister Shade faces charges of drinking and smoking in public. The film shows her drinking beer and smoking while walking on her way back home. Sister Shade goes a step further in her autonomous behaviour:- she sleeps with other people's husbands in the community. The dialogue in this plot offers little sympathy towards sister Shade. She appears to forget to use her intuition and common sense in the way she conducts herself in the rural cultural community. Sister Shade is shown as an example of arguably all that is bad about a woman in the perception of the public.

Despite some brilliant suggestion that would lead to the emancipation of women in the local church, her effort seems not to help the cause. She insists taking an extremely liberal position in her talk and her lifestyle. The following dialogue between Sister Shade and her husband shows the extent to which women's portrayals in the film favours men over women. Other than sex and gender-induced stereotypes, the film highlights that other factors such as social expectation are at play when it comes to women's subjugation in their communities. Sister Shade is at

the centre of social stereotypes that degrades women as bystanders in leadership. Her insistence on equality between male and female members of the local church community appears to have ignited an attack on her by female women in the church. Women in the church believes male superiority is God-given and anyone challenging the status quo is acting against God. The following dialogue exemplifies the discourse of equality and social relations between men and women:

Sister Shade: I think the laws of the church were made for its members not the other way round. How can you truly serve God when you're restricted from expressing yourself? I think women should have the right to what they want to hear in the church. If you feel you should wear trousers, wear trousers. If you feel like you should wear mini-skirts, wear mini-skirts. You must be free. As Christians, God didn't say that we should dress like monks. To serve God we should address and express ourselves. And I don't see why a woman cannot be ordained a Pastor of the church. Because all these years you have let these guys control your lives and that is a sin.

The above dialogue between Sister Shade and some church women is essential in the portrayal of women as social actors in the society. One could argue that she takes a radical stand too early as such she misses the opportunity to reach out to the women. Perhaps she could have made a deliberate effort to become one of them first and adapt to their local context on short term basis before gradually converting them to gender consciousness.

Just like in *The Pastor's Wife* where women oppress a fellow woman, the next film *Last Vote (2001)* looks at a dialogue that portrays women oppressing fellow women

as well. The difference between the two dialogues is that the former was based on cultural/social stereotype while the latter is based on class stereotype. In this regard, rich women in *Last Vote* oppress poor women by taking advantage of the latter's poverty and illiteracy.

F. Last Vote (2001)

Dialogue on sex, gender and class stereotypes on women

As introduced in the preceding paragraph, this film's portrayal of women can be seen as sex, gender and cultural stereotypes that result in marginalising women in all circles of life. In the case of this film, vulnerable women are portrayed as victims of greed and selfishness among male and female politicians. At least 60 pregnant women have died from taking expired drugs administered to them in the ante-natal clinics. Money destined for the purchase of drugs goes into the pockets of politicians. The dialogue between the new governor and a business woman known as Madam Abigail further portrays how women oppress fellow women in the film. Governor Emezie is a novice in politics and he takes a hard line against corrupt politicians and this annoys his senior party colleagues. Madam Abigail is one such powerful politician who confronts the new governor for frustrating their corrupt tactics:

Governor Emezie: I have made changes to the list of commissioners you presented to me. I have had the list investigated and it doesn't look good for most of the nominees.

Madam: I hope you did not touch the nominee from the Market Traders Association

Governor Emezie: Madam, your man in the Ministry of Trade is a certified thief.

Madam Abigail: What? Who says? Who cares? That is the man who will represent our interests. I hope you haven't forgotten the over 40 million Nairas contributed to your campaign by Market Traders Association. Not to mention the mass mobilisation. Mr. 'new' Governor, do not play with the Market Traders oh! I say, do not play with us the Market Traders oh! Without us you are going nowhere.

When the state governor sacks the commissioners in a crackdown to corruption,

Madam Abigail is canvassing for his removal:

Madam Abigail: After all the money spent on him, the governor decides to fire all our commissioners like that. He is behind the death of the pregnant women. He is in-charge of the state, so he must know everything bad going on and all the corruption going on must be his work. My fellow women, we must join hands to get rid of this governor

Thus, instead of protecting fellow women, Madam Abigail is using them to achieve her selfish agenda. She is involved in corrupt practices. She is part of the syndicate responsible for the diverting of funds for medicine purchase and this results in the shortage of drugs in public hospitals. This is critical when expectant women are administered to expiry drugs resulting into tons of deaths across the country. She is now agitating for the removal of the new governor because of his stance against corruption. Instead of protecting fellow women, Madam Abigail is exploiting them, hence, oppressing them.

However, this film and some of the other film case studies I have analysed contain some dialogues that portray female characters challenging male characters. This is

where the films act as an agency for social change. Women heroines are seen overcoming male chauvaunism by challenging the status quo that portrays men as dominant players in the social discourse. Arguably, when watched by both women and male viewers, these portrayals may contribute towards changing audiences' perception of women.

RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHAL MALE DOMINANCE

As previously stated, dialogues across the films portray discourses that signal challenges and resistances to male dominance over women. In *Mr & Mrs* there are many instances in the dialogues that demonstrate Susan challenging Kenneth's domination in various ways. Susan shows resistance to Kenneth's domination through her verbal and non-verbal gestures which set the tone of the dialogue leading to the latter regretting his decision to divorce her.

Susan (in reaction to Kenneth's attempt assault on her body): No, you don't touch me like that. I swear to God I'll kill you, I will kill you next time you touch me like that again

Susan (in response to Kenneth's family suggestion to put the paper work of divorce on hold): No, it can't wait. Tomorrow it is my freedom finally.

Susan: I will be going out this evening; it doesn't look like I'm coming back

Kenneth: You know, we have children and it is not good for you to be spending nights outside home what image are you going to give?

Susan: It's ok for you to date and bring her home, and I can't.

Susan (in reaction to Kenneth's action of bringing a woman in the home while she was still staying in the house in a different room

after their divorce): There is no competition, Ken, if this is it- you have failed.

After the divorce, Susan remains in the family home. Kenneth and Susan have been living in the same house with Kenneth's parents for some time now. Kenneth's family ask Susan to keep the divorce away from the public as the father is running for the governor elections. This news is likely to affect his bid and to avoid any external scrutiny, Susan agrees to remain in the home until after the elections. While this can be seen as another act of oppression on her by the family, it offers Susan an opportunity to challenge and resist their domination. This dialogue below represents several scenes where Ken is seen being challenged by Susan.

Kenneth (on the eve of divorce): You're not gonna beg?

Susan: No, let's go ahead

Kenneth (after divorce): And when I asked for a divorce, it was just a bid to humble you. I expected you to beg to protect the family, the children you love so much.

Later, the scene shows Kenneth having a dialogue with himself and regretting his action. The viewer sees Susan leaving the house at night with a supposed boyfriend and Kenneth makes an effort to spy on her and see for himself. He feels jealous and defeated. His predicament can be seen in the following dialogue within himself:

Kenneth: Please, please, let it not be true. Please, lord, let no man touch my wife, please, she's still my wife, and I still love her.

Kenneth later asks Susan for forgiveness, they reconcile and both work out the terms of a new relationship that guarantee fair share of power relations in the home. The question that a viewer would ask is whether Kenneth's apparent change of heart is

out of genuine conviction that Susan deserves better or not. Some would argue that his action is the result of his ego rather than a change of perception and attitude towards Susan as an equal partner in their relationship.

Other than in *Mr & Mrs*, scenes in *Not With My Daughter* depict dialogues where the female character, Adanma, challenges male domination in various ways. She fights back whenever Hussein and his family members attack her. Adanma is portrayed as militant who acts and speaks in defence of her rights in a highly patriarchal dominated situation. Her challenge or resistance can be appreciated when compared to her rival, Hussein's second Moslem wife, Khadjat. Khadjat is seen worshipping Hussein and always addresses him as 'my lord' while Adanma addresses him by his name 'Hussein or baby.' Adanma only addresses Hussein as 'my lord' on very rare occasions and it is always as sarcasm or a protest which leaves the husband looking stupid and defeated. Sarcasm is also shown regarding the attire or dressing; Adanma is seen covering her face on one occasion and the whole of her body and face on another. In either scene, it is difficult for Hussein to recognise her and she somehow exaggerates. Hussein sees the sarcasm in Adanma actions:

Hussein: What are you doing there?

Adanma: Yes, my lord, cutting the wood for fire.

Hussein: Ada, do you have to call me 'my lord'? Ada, why are you doing all this (cutting wood for fire using axe)? Let me help you. You are not supposed to cover your face in this house only when you are out of the house. Let me remove you.

Adanma: Hussein, do I ever do anything good in this house?

Hussein (on another occasion at night): Who are you? Who are you in this house? (Hussein cannot recognise Adanma as she has covered her whole face and he could not recognise her.

Adanma: My lord. It's me, Jamilah. Yes, my lord. I brought some food for you.

Hussein: (Hussein shakes his head in disbelief and stares at her in shock).

The dialogue above suggests that Adanma is fighting for her freedom and her message is very clear to Hussein. She seems to have realised that physical confrontation can no longer be sustained. Her sarcasm in the way she dresses and addresses Hussein sends a clear message to her husband that she is ridiculing the culture of women oppression surrounding her. Hussein looks defeated and confused by her wife's act instead of jubilation. He looks a man resigned as it is clear to him that Adanma is making fun of his cultural demands. Towards the last scenes, Hussein is portrayed as being repentant and confesses his love for his wife. But he is torn between his wife and the community:

Hussein: I am confused. You know how much I love and care about you. But I have responsibilities. I have my people. My community....

Adanma: Baby, I am not a wicked woman. You have to make a choice between me and your people.

Hussein: Honey, is it wrong to have both? Isn't it African to have you and my people at the same time?

Adanma: Honey, it's not like that.....

The above dialogue implies that despite the abuse Adanma receives from Hussein, the couple have a degree of respect and love for each other. Hussein confesses he is

confused and he still loves his wife. It's unlike the scenario involving Kenneth and Susan in *Mr & Mrs* where a viewer would argue that the former reacted out of ego rather than a reflection of love and respect for the latter. The suggestion regarding Hussein and Adanma could be based on the discourse that is dominant whenever the two hold a sober dialogue. Hussein's attitude is not demeaning on Adanma. On several occasions, Hussein has defended and protected Adanma from his mother's attack. Hussein even divorced his second wife Khadjat when the latter fought with Adanma. His attitude in respect of Adanma is portrayed in the way he addresses his wife in the dialogue above, with words such as "honey," and in the dialogue below, "I am sorry, please forgive me."

Hussein: I feel I should apologise. I am sorry for all I have put you through, please forgive me.

Further to this observation, we never hear this in the case of Kenneth until the end when their supposed divorce is settled. Also, Adanma does not suffer from low self-esteem nor does she live like a slave in their home. Adanma suffers sexual and gender stereotyping due to Islamic religious prejudices and customs subjected to her by her husband Hussein and his people. Instead of letting Hussein and his people's customs silence her, Adanma is portrayed to be at liberty to surmount the sort of oppression subjecting to her. Perhaps, Adanma's education and social upbringing played a part in her fight for social justice. She is a graduate and brought up in a city where there is a negotiated social relationship between men and women. As a matter of fact, women marginalisation is not as worse as that in Hussein's village community.

In the *Royal Fight*, the leading character, Dubem, is portrayed as outstanding in the eyes of her fellow characters in the plot. Arguably, her portrayal is by far the most exceptional in being used as a role model of female representation in the Nollywood films. She is shown as growing from being a short tempered and violent girl to a cool tempered, peaceful and mature young woman. She is a queen who balances the requirements of royalty and at the same time as speaking up whenever others step on her toes. The respect of her is portrayed in scenes where she handles her husband's volatile temper and helps him to keep his cool. In one scene, she steps in to evade a fight between her husband and his half-brother Uchedu:

Dubem: Ikenna, you should apologise to your brother. You shouldn't have spoken to his brother in that manner, please, apologise.

It is such portrayal that Dubem wins the approval of everyone in the royal household including her husband, Ikenna.

In *The Comforter*, Amarachi is portrayed in the dialogues as a strong and intelligent young woman. She is depicted as a hard worker and as an intelligent and influential young woman. She is credited by her boss-turned prospective father-in-law for transforming the life of his son, Henry. She is also a loving and humble young woman. Her major flaw is that she commits suicide instead of remaining strong.

In the eyes of other characters in the film, Sister Shade is probably the least popular. This makes her portrayal being the least positive. Most of the other characters in the film, including her husband, discredit her conduct and attitude. However, it has been argued earlier in this chapter that Sister Shade is probably a strong character worth to

emulate in her own merit. She stands up for the women's rights and defines her own way of life. Unfortunately, her community does not appreciate her. This results in a clash of cultural values and beliefs between her and the community. She is probably a victim of the clash of Western and African ideologies.

Perhaps of significance to note is the attitude of her husband and the social distance between them. Despite ever-growing impatience over his wife's 'unrepentant' conduct and lifestyle, Pastor James is shown in the dialogues as a respectful and loving husband who does all he can to change his wife's behaviour. There are scenes that show that Pastor James is not a controlling and manipulative husband as is the case with Hussein in *Not With My Daughter* and Kenneth in *Mr & Mrs. Sister Shade* does not suffer from low self-esteem and does not allow cultural expectations to pile pressure on her. The dialogues between the couple reveals love, respect and do not show a gap in social and gender relations as can be evidenced in the following extracts:

Sister Shade: Darling, it's lunch time now, please, come on, let's go home, take a break.

Pastor James: Honey, I am attending to the people right now. Shade please go home, I have work to do right now

Pastor James (finds the wife dancing to loud music at home): What are you doing now? I am not happy with the way you are behaving and the way you talk to the women at the church. Remember this is not the States (referring to America).

Sister Shade: I am trying to keep myself happy since everybody around here including my sweet heart husband insists on branding me as a mistake, an outcast. Then let me go back to the USA where I have peace in my heart. We used to pray together, used to love

together but since you became a pastor you became a different person. Now it's about work, work and that damned Church of yours. Even God rested after creation, why can't you take some time and rest and spend time with me your darling wife.

Pastor James: I am sick of your scandals in the community and I don't like your friendship with this girl...Angella.

Sister Shade: If you had kept to your duty as a husband maybe I wouldn't have gone seeking comfort outside. You abandoned me. All you do is to go about that damned church of yours.

However, Sister Shade's militant behaviour has not helped matters and it forces the other women to avoid her and hence she fails to act as an agent of social change in this regard.

We have another militant woman in the film *Last Vote*, and arguably for the wrong reasons: greed, corruption, selfishness and manipulation of both men and fellow women. Madam Abigail is a strong political figure and very influential in Abra's state politics. From the film dialogue, the viewer is able to appreciate the talent and skill of Madam Abigail as a mass mobiliser and political party funder. It is evident that she does not do that out of a passion to serve but for business reasons. Earlier I presented and discussed the dialogue that ensued between Madam Abigail and the state governor Emezie. The dialogue gives a clear account of Madam Abigail as a corrupt woman.

In the scenes unfolding, the viewer is introduced to female characters that portray a contrary picture to that of Madam Abigail. This is revealed in the dialogue between Mrs. Emezie, the governor's wife and her husband at household level; Mrs. Igwe and her fellow Market Women's Association legislatures at community level.

Upon hearing the news that 60 pregnant women have died after being given an expired drug at the ante-natal clinic, Mrs. Emezie confronts her husband and challenges him to either act swiftly on the issue of corruption or resign.

Mrs. Emezie: Darling, how can this happen? How? You can't just sit down and do nothing about it.

Governor Emezie: Honey, these people are very powerful and very rich. I can't stop them. They own the electorate, they own the House of Assembly and they own the Trade Unions.

Mrs. Emezie: Rubbish Karu. Nonsense! Is being a governor so important to you and that you can just watch criminals killing over 60 women? Could you live with this, Karu? Could you live with this?

Governor Emezie: They're very smart people. Very... very... smart. I have fallen into a trap. They wanted somebody fresh...they knew that people are tired of them and they needed somebody and they've got me.

Mrs. Emezie: Look, if you cannot do anything about this, you better resign. That is if you have integrity, if there is any left.

The governor launches a fierce and risky fight against corruption. The governor's success arguably can largely be attributed to the involvement of some women politicians who defied their party's demand to oust him. The women legislators led by Mrs. Igwe supported the governor and defeated the impeachment motion to save the governor. The motion was tabled in parliament by legislators on instructions from the party chiefs who were bitter with the new governor's anti-graft drive. These women are motivated by a need to get to the bottom of corruption that is evident in the death of 60 pregnant women who were administered to expired drugs at the ante-natal clinics across the state. The following dialogue between Mrs. Igwe and the

governor's chief of staff, Reverend Magnus Thabo portrays how strong the former is in defence of the poor:

Mrs. Igwe (upon seeing the presence of the chief of staff at her business premises is angry at him and speaks up her mind): What do you want here? The perpetrators of deaths of innocent women! The so-called reverend... In fact you don't deserve to be called reverend. You get out of here. I will not allow people who cause death to innocent women to come close to me. (Mrs. Igwe leaves the chief of staff at the entrance of her premises begging to have an audience with her)

Chief of staff: Please, allow us to present our part of the story. I know you are an honest lady.

Mrs. Igwe: Yes, I am honest. That's why I can't stand your presence. (She later, reluctantly, lets him in)

Like Madam Abigail, she is an influential leader of business women. During the dialogue, the chief of staff manages to convince Mrs. Igwe of the root causes of the recent mass deaths of the pregnant women at the ante-natal clinics, a issue that dominates the public discourse apparently. He goes further to present to her the wider picture of corruption including a dossier of corrupt senior party officials who want to impeach the governor. Later, when Madam Abigail comes into scene to convince the market women legislatures with misleading facts that implicates the governor in the incidence that led to the death of expectant women at the ante-natal clinics, Mrs. Igwe comes to Governor Emezie's defence in the following dialogue:

Mrs Igwe: Does the president buy the drugs? Who orders the drugs and who issues the invoice? Is it that you have pity for the victims or you have some selfish agenda?

Madam Abigail: Mrs. Igwe, why do you seem to be personal? Who is in-charge of the state? Who is presiding over the state? This governor must go.

Mrs. Igwe: Nobody accused him of being corrupt all along with all that happens. He fires the commissioners that are bad in the first place. He sets up commissions of inquiries. Isn't the impeachment aimed at making the inquiries ineffective? Is it the governor or the selfish ones that have a problem? Is the governor guilty? Did he import the drugs? Or are you moved by selfish interests? Now, decide whether we should allow the Market Women Association to be used for oppression of the people or not?

Mrs. Igwe plays the crucial agent of social change in distributing a dossier of abandoned contracts and other corrupt activities involving big names in the ruling party. The documents reveal lists of senior party officials implicated in series of corrupt activities including the abandoned projects. These are the same people trying to discredit the governor. Madam Abigail is involved in some of these activities and the documents are now made public to the members present. In the following extract, Mrs. Igwe asks:

Mrs. Igwe: You have now read the documents. Now, my dear women, who is corrupt? The governor who has set up the commissions of inquiries and stops the privatisation of the state companies which you Madam Abigail have purchased?

Thus the film, within the political and governance narrative, portrays women as social actors. Arguably, women viewers may consider this heroism representation of fellow women in the film as encouraging and somehow empowering to them. Thus, a film in this regard acts as an agent of change in society.

In terms of social and gender relations between men and women especially in the home, the dialogue between Linda and her husband in *Mr & Mrs (2011)* seemingly

presents a challenge to relations which still have women suffer from gaps in social relations based on gender and sex. The extract of a dialogue between Linda and her husband (family friends to Susan and Kenneth) in *Mr & Mrs* below could be regarded as a model of a melodramatic discourse that is free from sexual, gender, class, religious and cultural stereotyping:

Linda: Hi honey! What's up baby?

Husband: You are welcome. So, honey how was your day?

Linda: Oh hectic baby, coupled with this promotion thing. You know I'm due this month. So, I need to put in extra effort of work.

Husband: Don't worry baby, you will make it.

Linda: Baby, what can I do without you? You are the most caring and understanding husband on planet earth. Uhh! That is why I love you baby....

Husband: Sweet, I can't do anything to the contrary. That would be going against our vows, you know.

Linda: Have you had a bath? Don't have funny ideas, I am so tired. Don't worry I will make it up to you baby.

Husband: I was waiting for you. Come on.

Linda: Don't have funny ideas, I am so tired. Don't worry, I will make it to you baby.

Husband: Ok.

The above couple's relationship is apparently the opposite of Susan and Kenneth. The wife, Linda, is probably the sole breadwinner in the house. The husband does not seem to work and helps out with some domestic chores while Linda is at work. He looks after the children: takes them to school and makes sure everything is in place at home. The dialogue between Linda and her husband probably serves as an

example of ideal gender and social relations between a man and a woman. It presents a young couple whose dialogue reveals a case in point of a man whose perception of his wife is that of equal partner. Thus, the man is seen showing respect to his wife and the love between the two is evident:- the language used in the dialogue and the way the couple address each other is a demonstration of their close relationship.

However, some could argue that maybe the husband would not be so respectful and accommodating if he was also a working class let alone the lone breadwinner in the house. Others could argue that most studies on African gender and societies suggest that gender and sexual stereotyping that characterise patriarchal societies in most African communities see men exert excess control over their spouses regardless of women's economic income (White, 2010).

CATEGORIES OF STEREOTYPES IDENTIFIED IN THE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SIX CASE STUDY FILMS

AN OVERVIEW PICTURE

From the discussions of the dialogues of films in this chapter, it is evident that gender, culture, religion, class and sex stereotypes foster the perception of male and female characters in the films to have a low or negative opinion of female characters. Dialogue in the films reveals that female characters such as Susan, Dubem, Sister Shade, Adanma and Amarachi are victimised or oppressed first, based on their sex.

For instance, Susan is marginalised in Kenneth's family household because she is a female in the first place. The same applies to Adanma:- she is expected to convert to Islam and her name and her daughter's name have been changed from Adanma to Jamilah and Khem to Amina respectively. The imposition of a change of identity for Adanma signifies cultural and religious domination that is induced by patriarchal beliefs and practices of Hussein's community.

SEX/ GENDER

Sex stereotypes are associated with and relate to gender stereotypes. Gender as a concept is a social construct. It applies or gives meaning to a representation based on the individual reader's context: political, cultural, social, association, religious and educational status. As a cultural construct, gender has prescribed roles and functions that are deemed as masculine or feminine. Likewise, the public ascribe roles based on their concept of gender. In the films discussed here, gender is driven or emanates from sex. When it comes to perception, characters of the female sex are categorised as women and because of their sex, it also affects their gender role and perception. Thus, dialogues in the films such as *Mr & Mrs*, *Not With My Daughter*, *Royal Fight*, *The Comforter* and *Last Vote* have shown that female characters are asked to behave ('perform') differently because they are women.

RELIGION

Religion is another aspect that can lead to the viewer having misinformed opinions or attitudes towards female characters. As deduced from the dialogues in *Not With My Daughter*, it is evident that regardless of education and other social factors,

religion is a social construct which becomes a very powerful force among its believers or practitioners. Thus, religion informs culture and other social considerations. As evidenced from the experience of the character Adanma in the plot, the main reason she is subjected to abuse and rejection is because she follows a different path from Islam. She is marginalised because she is a Christian in the first place and the issue of sex comes later. This highlights the extent to which Hussein's family is intolerant to her just because she is not one of their 'own'. The film depicts Adanma as liberal and follows a different path of lifestyles from the rest of Hussein's family and they can not contain her. They accuse her of being a 'loose' woman who is wayward just because she dresses and speaks with confidence and treats Hussein as an equal. This is in contrast to Khadja, Hussein second wife (moslem) who adores Hussein and addresses him "Yes, my lord" while lowering her gaze.

CLASS

Class emerges as another category feeding into stereotype especially in *Mr & Mrs* and *The Comforter*. Dialogue in *Mr & Mrs* between Susan and Kenneth's family reveals that the main source of the family's domination over Susan goes beyond sex, it extends to class. Susan comes from a poor background and Kenneth's family feels she does not deserve him and this results in her marginalisation. Towards the end, Kenneth himself cites class differences as the cause for divorce. The language used to associate Susan's background demeans her further "daughter of a wretched wash-man" as Kenneth time and again puts it.

CULTURAL/ SOCIAL

Culture is a dominant factor in sexual, gender and religious stereotyping as the case in point in the dialogue involving Sister Shade in the *The Pastor's Wife*. Some of the senior church women are portrayed victimising their fellow female (Sister Shade) just because she holds a divergent view on male-female social relation. There are scenes as evidence to this claim throughout the films. In *Not With My Daughter*, Hussein's mother victimises Adanma using the differences in religion and culture as Adanma is Igbo from the South which has a legacy of rivalry between the two ethnic groups. The fact that Adanma is a Christian makes the case for religious stereotyping claim much stronger in this case study film. In *The Pastor's Wife*, women church members at Pastor James' congregation gang up against Sister Shade. They justify their attitude and action against her based on culture. They are stereotyping Sister Shade's lifestyle, especially her relationship with some male members was suspicious and her dress code was below the expectation of an African woman let alone a Pastor's wife. In other words, Sister Shade suffers from social and cultural stereotype.

Having discussed the film's narratives and dialogues along the lines of gender, class, religious, sex and cultural stereotypes, it is significant to note that the highlighted leading female characters in each film could be seen as paving the way for a change in public perceptions and attitudes towards women. The next discussion therefore centres on audiences' reaction to the above discussed portrayals of women in the case study films.

SECTION TWO

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM FOCUS GROUPS REGARDING FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE CASE STUDY FILMS

INTRODUCTION

The previous section gave detailed research on films based on the relationship female characters had with male characters. The analysis on the six case study films using dialogue suggests that acts of heroism depicted by the leading female characters could pave way for a change in public perceptions and attitudes towards women. Whether this has the potential or not has to be established by the viewers. This section therefore provides analysis of audiences' reaction to the films and is intended to ascertain whether the films have the potential for social change or not in relation to gender relations between male and female in Malawian society.

During their discussions, various issues emerged among participants across and within the focus groups (**See Appendix 3: Summary of focus group discussions**).

1. MALUBALO FOCUS GROUP

For participants from the Mabulabo Focus Group, the issue of society/community was a recurring theme. Alongside community, other repeated subthemes associated with it were notions of extended family, compassion and love. Participants cited *Royal Fight*, *The Comforter*, *Mr & Mrs* and *Last Vote* as films that encompass the

notion of community. They further said that the films demonstrate notions of love and compassion as exemplified in the characters of Dubem and the Queen Mother in *Royal Fight*, Amarachi in *The Comforter*, Linda in *Mr & Mrs* and Mrs. Igwe in *Last Vote*. Most parents in the group pointed out the exceptional leadership role that Queen Mother plays in the royal household and in the kingdom at large. They noted that in the absence of the king due to illness, his wife, the Queen Mother, takes charge of the royal household and affairs of the kingdom. They said that she demonstrates good leadership skills and everybody in the royal household including her husband, complies with her decisions. They described her as cool-headed. This wins her the support and respect of everyone in the household. They further reckoned that the same is also shown in the character of her daughter-in-law, Dubem, Prince Ikenna's wife. They said that when Ikenna becomes king, the wife who is now a queen, gives counsel to the husband. She is seen persuading him to exercise restraint as Ikenna is naturally a short-tempered man. With his wife, the youthful king is now a changed person. Thus, Dubem, just like Queen Mother, appeals to the participating audiences as a strong young woman.

Within their analysis of the films, focusing on society/community, participants commented that the aspect of extended family shown in *Royal Fight* is a reflection of their own society and therefore they easily identify themselves with the film. Thus, most participants indicated that the film benefit them in a way that they learn how to be good to those around them indiscriminately. In fact, male participants indicated that they learned how to love and handle their spouses in the face of diversity. They cited Ikenna and Henry as men whom they could relate to as role models. They

argued that the two stood by their loved ones amidst the social rejection of their partner;- situations that put these men's love to test. Dubem was childless and Ikenna was under pressure to divorce her. Amarachi was wrongly accused of murder and Henry persisted in protesting her innocence to the end.

2. MZIMBA FOCUS GROUP

Participants from Mzimba Focus Group identified several key issues in the film similar to their counterparts in Mabulabo, they noted that they found the female characters of Amarachi, Dubem, Queen Mother, Linda, Susan and Mrs. Igwe exemplary. They stated that these women display genuine African qualities expected of a woman or a mother: love, respect, compassion, loyalty and forgiveness. They argued that the scenes in *Royal Fight*, *Mr & Mrs*, *Last Vote* and *The Comforter* as discussed in section one of this chapter demonstrate instances where women are portrayed as agents of love, forgiveness and sacrifice for their spouses or partners. They state that the aforementioned female characters even offered their compassion and love to extended family members of their spouses as was the case with Amarachi when she risked her life to save Henry's aunt, Rose. This extends even to society as a whole as the case is with Mrs. Igwe and her fellow members of the Market Women Association in *Last Vote*. Mrs. Igwe led a revolution of small scale business women against corruption in one of Nigeria's states. Some female members of this focus group expressed their admiration for these characters and indicated they were worth trying to emulate.

However, members held differing opinions over the characters Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife* and Linda in *Mr & Mrs*. Some argued that these two characters are good examples of how to assess women's emancipation in contemporary Africa in the face of the prevailing low public perception of women in society. Others countered that these female characters showcase the qualities that are not 'genuinely' African and do not merit any admiration at all. However, they all agreed that class difference remains an issue in marriages involving poor and rich partners cross their community. Therefore, Kenneth and Susan scenario in *Mr & Mrs* is identical to their own experiences. Some participants gave their respective testimonies to illustrate their points regarding the extent to which the issue of the rich and the poor is divisive in real life.

In my view, I concur with the observation by some of the participants regarding the situation of rich-poor families in Malawian society. It is worthwhile however to note that women in Malawian society could borrow a leaf from Susan's action to liberate herself from the chain of class stereotype. Thus, following Susan's challenge or protest gestures to Kenneth's domineering attitude towards her, the latter is reduced from being a little dictator who is dominating, patriarchal, exploitative, insensitive, disrespectful, egoistical and sexist to an understanding, thoughtful, simple and, perhaps weak character. Kenneth's change of attitude leads him to reunite with Susan and he turns out to be a loving and caring husband once again. Thus, the film *Mr & Mrs* presents a case in point whereby an individual social actor possesses or constructs two opposing discourses: the homogeneous and the rebellious discourse (see Rathzel, 1997). In relation to Kenneth's scenario, her earlier action of harassing

Susan was based on the family's resistance for him to get married to a woman from a poor family and their son act in support of this hegemonous attitude. Likewise, when Kenneth realised that he had made a mistake and he is rebelling against such hegemonous attitude, hence, is fighting for a reunion.

In teaming up with his mother against his wife, Kenneth displays homogeneous characteristics associated with patriarchy and class relations (Rathzel, 1997). It is this collective class discourse portrayed that is oppressive to Susan much more than the sexist discourse. Reconciliation with Susan saw a return to their old / original relationship and portrays an 'individual' discourse in Kenneth that opposes the 'collective' class discourse that Kenneth and his family (the Abbah family) belongs to. It is the latter that could probably role-play as an agent of change in public perception of women. Mzimba community is patriarchal in which both female and male audiences have the opportunity to emulate the film characters as they share a homogeneous cultural beliefs and practices that define a gender discourse that is male dominated.

3. NKHATABAY FOCUS GROUP

In discussing the female representation, participants from Nkhatabay observed that the films portray Nigerian cultures that are identical to Malawian cultures as evidenced in the characters' obsession with religion, magic and other common spiritual and moral rituals. They further noted that the films depict love, patience and tolerance especially from the perspective of male characters in *The Comforter*, *Royal Fight* and *Not With My Daughter*. They argued that Henry, Ikenna and Hussein in

these films demonstrate love, passion, understanding and care for their loved ones Amarachi, Dubem and Adanma respectively against all odds. Like their counterparts in Mabulabo, they stated that these men ought to be emulated by fellow male viewers. However, they were critical of Adanma's portrayal as unrealistic, arguing, the character exaggerated her portrayal of anti-patriarchal dominance protest. At the same time they viewed Sister Shade's portrayal as un-African, arguing, the character too exaggerated her acts as they could be no way a pastor's wife could act in the manner displayed under any circumstances.

4. KANENGO FOCUS GROUP

Participants from the Kanengo Focus Group observed that the films portrayed characteristics of women and men similar to those possessed by most Malawians. In accordance with the observations in the groups discussed earlier, the portrayal of love, compassion and care was key in their analysis of *Royal Fight*, *Mr & Mrs*, and *The Comforter*. They indicated that the characters deserve to be emulated by the viewers. They indicated that the way the films demonstrate social relations between male and female characters give them lessons to redefine their social relations with the opposite sex. Some indicated that through the films they have learned how to manage and resolve conflicts in their family. One male participant applauded the characters in *Mr & Mrs*, *The Comforter* and *Royal Fight*.

However, opinions were divided on Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife* and Linda in *Mr & Mrs*. Some members felt that Sister Shade was a misfit in society whilst others defended her portrayal as a reflection of the changes in the dynamics of gender and

social relations in contemporary Malawi. The same analysis applied to Linda. Some participants were of the opinion that she goes too far in advancing her career at the expense of her marriage. Others sided with her arguing she is a role model for women viewers.

In summary, the overall reactions of this group suggests that although these films are works of fiction, made for commercial gain by a predominantly elite, male workforce, they bear the traces of the cultural struggles of the contemporary African societies (see Kozloff, 2000). Thus, scenes within the plots display agonised division over how to talk and when to talk, over what to reveal and what to hide, over how women (should) speak and how men (should) speak in a way reflecting the reality of gender relations in the present African societies (Kozloff, 2000: 268).

5. LILONGWE FOCUS GROUP

In contrast, participants from Lilongwe Focus Group were full of praise for Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife*, Amarachi in *The Comforter*, Adanma in *Not With My Daughter*, Dubem and the Queen Mother in *Royal Fight*, Linda in *Mr & Mrs* and Mrs. Igwe in *Last Vote*. This was a mixed group (men and women) just like their counterparts in Kanengo, Mzimba and Malubalo. Most of the participants agreed that the characters are a shining example to the youthful women. They stated that Sister Shade challenges the status quo in society which they claimed favours men at the expense of women. They also applauded the portrayal of Adanma as remarkable and agreed that she challenges the patriarchal oppression based on gender and sexual stereotypes in the guise of religion and culture. They singled out Amarachi as a

model young woman who excels in her career and saves her employer from bankruptcy against all odds. They stated that the depiction of the character Linda is an exceptionally practical portrayal of an ambitious and focused young career woman who excels at work and also has a happy family life. However, they deplored the portrayal of Susan as they considered it conflicting. They argued that the first scenes involving Susan in *Mr & Mrs* are demeaning to womanhood.

Discourse and conversational analysis of the first and second part of the portrayal of Susan in *Mr & Mrs* helps to shed light on whether participants' reaction is based on their own discourse or adjusted to external discourses. This could be the gender discourse that is deemed popular among the discussants or the researcher. It could further be a reaction to the 'fashionable' Western media propelled gender discourse of a modern woman (see Fairclough, 1995). From the discussions on the film portrayals and the debate that ensued, it is clear that respondents reactions were partly being informed by their exposure to the films where they learned life styles on gender maybe different from their own. It appears the respondents did appropriate the concept of ideological deconstruction through the consumption of media such as television and films that is probably key in their opinion formation. Thus, this confirms Fairclough's (1995: 199) observation regarding the social effect of the media in which he attests that the viewers tell a story about their own viewing practices, and hence, they watch and assimilate a news story. They then think about it from their own perspective, and arrive at a point of view about it. This is by no means the group's own account of the viewing process rather it is arguably a widely used, and ideologically potent, social narrative. The respondents critical analysis of

the film characters which was based partly on their own life experiences and partly on their exposure to media effects, supports Fairclough's assertion regarding the effect of media on the viewers.

6. NTCHEWU FOCUS GROUP

Participants from Ntchewu Focus Group stated that the films teach them skills to manage love relationships. They further stated that the films reflect the practical aspect of African life in their portrayals of the role or place of women in extended families as is the case of Dubem in *Royal Fight* and Adanma in *Not With My Daughter*. In accordance with other participants discussed earlier in this section, the group confessed that it is in fact the depiction of the real life situation of African women and their passion to serve and preserve the family values that is appealing to them as well. Dubem and Amarachi (in *The Comforter*) were cases in point.

However, the family deplored the extent to which witchcraft is portrayed in female characters in the films. They all agreed that in an African society it is not unusual for women to take love potion or African medicine as Dubem did. Dubem consulted the magician to solve her childlessness. In reaction to such portrayals, participants stated that the way the female character of Dubem is portrayed appears to stigmatise women as a category of people obsessed with *juju* (magical power) to manipulate the situation in order to preserve their marriage. One male member of the focus group conceded the fact that witchcraft is a common phenomenon in Malawi. He however bemoaned the film for encouraging the practices. He faulted the characters for apparently celebrating witchcraft, a practice, which he said, is unMalawian. Most of

the participants argued that this makes the viewers believe that women on their own can not manage their relationships without *juju*. Thus, they detested the fact that in most Nollywood films if a man is shown loving his wife passionately the viewers would credit the initiative to *juju*.

Thus, they observed that such portrayal is selective and gender biased, arguing that men also use *juju* in African societies. Such gender stereotypes they said, are unfortunately becoming common in the contemporary Malawi. If a woman is seen loving her spouse openly in Malawi, the public makes no issue out of it whilst if the opposite happens every one is tempted to conclude that it is *juju* at play. This phenomenon confirms the application of Hall's (1997:25) constructionist theory of representation. As discussed in chapter three of the thesis, Hall's constructionist approach acknowledges that it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts (Ibid). Hall states that it is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about the world meaningfully to others (ibid). By implication, Hall's constructionist theory of representation can help to understand that *juju* is stigmatised in Malawi, and hence, by associating it with women makes the latter victims of bad public perception. Thus, women in this case are likely to suffer from a reinforced stigma: *juju and sexism*. In other words, it is a stereotype based on gender and sex. This probably promotes a poor public perception of them.

However, the same portrayal of juju in the film would be interpreted on face value in Nigerian society. One would argue that to a Nigerian audience, watching Dubem consulting the magician to intervene in her social problem does not make the plot or scene agent of evil. Hall (1997: 25) discusses intentional approach to representation theory. Hall's intentional approach is apparently a relevant proposition to understand the place of *juju* in Nigerian/African traditional societies as represented in Nollywood films. As discussed in chapter three, intentional approach implies that individuals communicate things which are special or unique to them, to their way of seeing things. Thus, in the case of assumed Nigerian's audience's assessment of magician's intervention, it is a communication that is dependent on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes. Thus, the portrayal of female character visiting magician could have a different connotation to a Nigerian audience from their Malawian counterparts. Based on reaction of Malawian audiences to portrayal of women in relation to *juju*, there is a potential for such acts to reinforce social perception of stereotyping women. In contrast, to a Nigerian society, arguably, the same acts could be accepted as part of the tradition or custom to intervene people's social problems. This therefore brings in an element of subjectivity in the way audiences interpret representations in the films.

On the social relationship between male and female characters, these participants further accused Pastor James in *The Pastor's Wife* for failing to reconcile church ministry with family responsibilities. They said that Pastor James portrayal manipulates the viewer to sympathise with him and turn against Sister Shade when it

should have been the opposite. They said the wife was entitled to have a husband by her side and attend to her needs first before those of the congregation.

However, participants were divided over their analysis of the portrayals of Linda and Susan in *Mr & Mrs*, Adanma in *Not With My Daughter* and Amarachi in *The Comforter*. The father and the mother of the house deplored Linda as an irresponsible wife who does not take care of her family because of her passion for her job. The children praised her for her progress at work. Both parents deplored Adanma as arrogant in the way she conducts herself with her husband's extended family. The children applauded her for being strong and militant enough to protect her rights from abuse at the hands of cultural and religious practices that prejudice her because of her sex, gender and non-Islamic background. Both parents described Amarachi as a real African woman who risks her life for someone who ruined her own life. The children described her as a coward who fails to fight to the end. Thus, they argued that whatever good she does in the first place is ruined by her decision to commit suicide. Probably, subjective reaction to films could be explained better in terms of generation gap between parents and their children. On one hand, parents have a different cultural and social context that forms their opinion on gender and social relations. On the other hand, children have their own that is largely informed by their exposure to cultures beyond their own, and media being one source that may influence their opinion on gender relations.

7. MANGOCHI FOCUS GROUP

Participants from Mangochi Focus Group indicated that the films appeal to them as in most aspects they are a reflection of their communities. They singled out the social relationship between men and women as similar to their own situation. They however noted that the films depict some elements of Nigerian societies that are different from their own. They cited the conflict of culture and religion in *Not With My Daughter* as a case in point. They stated that whilst there are conflicts due to cultural and religious differences in families, in their community, women are not victimised in the way Hussein's family treats his wife, Adanma. However, they applauded Adanma for proving to be a strong woman and praise Hussein for being loving and accommodating towards Adanma. They argued that Hussein always treated Adanma as an equal contrary to the expectation of his community. Thus although Islamic teachings dictate that women should treat men as their masters, they considered that Hussein and Adanma treat each other intimately. They contrasted Adanma's social relations with Hussein to that of her rival wife, Hadjat. Thus, some participants within the group cited binaries they identified in the portrayals of women in *Not With My Daughter*, for example. They noted that Ada addresses her husband as her equal by simply calling him 'Hussein' which was strange to members of his extended family. The local girl, Hadjat, who was taken as a second wife calls Hussein 'master' 'my lord' and treats him as a king which was common. Ada confronts Hussein to explain himself for his actions such as when she suspects that Hussein was having an extra-marital relationship with Hadjat. Ada even confronts her mother-in-law over her child. The mother-in-law forces the

couple's daughter to go to the local Islamic school while Ada wanted the child to go to a secular school. Thus, participants' discussion exposed binaries in social relations between men and women in the films based on sexual and religious factors. Adanma is seen as a victim of culture, religious and sexual stereotyping on one hand while Hadjat is depicted as a victim of class, sexual and religious practices existing within her own community. While Adanma is conscious of her subjection and is fighting the status quo, the same cannot be said of Hadjat as her worldview is socially construed to perceive blind loyalty to a husband as a God's-given.

The action of Hadjat is a reflection of social beliefs and practices within her community based on the strict Islamic teachings and traditions that become big component of some traditional African communities. It confirms Fairclough's (1989: 19) assertion that linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak, listen, write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects. He states that people use language in ways which are subject to social convention. He argues that the ways in which people use language in their most intimate and private encounters are not only socially determined by the social relationships of the family, they also have social effects in the sense of helping to maintain or change those relationships. The way Adanma and Hussein use language to address each other demonstrates the extent to which power is shared between them. It is clear that there is a reasonable share of power relations between the couple. This contrasts with the way language is used in the discourse of Hussein's second wife, Hadjat, it is clear that the man wields more power which when exercised in a family communication exposes parities in social relations.

The above contrast in social relationship to Hussein between Hadjat and Adanma owing to differences in their respective socialisation processes was reflected in the participants too. Though drawn from the same community, individual participants from Mangochi Focus Group have had their own socialisation process at family, educational and post-educational level. Religious affiliation too appeared to have played a role. These aspects brought in divided views over the portrayal of Susan in *Mr & Mrs* and Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife*. They said that Susan's portrayal sends a conflicting message to the viewers. They further described Sister Shade's portrayal as unrealistic.

8. LUNZU FOCUS GROUP

Participants from Lunzu Focus Groups discussed several issues regarding female representation in Nollywood films. All participants agreed that the films are inspiring and educative to them on how they could relate with their partners. With reference to the portrayal of Henry and his fiancée, Amarachi, in *The Comforter*, one male participant stated that the male character teaches them how to handle their women. He cited the tendency of opening and closing the car doors for women among young men in Malawi as a new phenomenon and attributed that to Nollywood films like *The Comforter*.

The Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis examines how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices and through interactional strategies of talk and action (Lazar, 2005). Thus, the act of opening and closing doors for a

woman as portrayed in the characters of Henry and Amarachi in *The Comforter* is one example of such communicative actions. Relations of power and dominance (Bourdieu, 1991; Gramsci, 1971), however, can be discursively resisted as well as counter-resisted in a dynamic struggle over securing and challenging the interests at stake. From a critical discourse analytic perspective, it is useful to complement the concept of modern power with the view of power relations as dominance (Fairclough, 1999). The effectiveness of modern power (and hegemony) is that it is mostly cognitive, based on internalisation of gendered norms and acted out routinely in the texts and talk of everyday life. This makes it an invisible power, 'misrecognised' as such, and 'recognised' instead as quite legitimate and natural (Bourdieu, 1991).

The relevance of these portrayals therefore is that participants indicated that the films teach them to be open in their love relationships, citing, Ikenna and Dubem in *Royal Fight* and Henry and Amarachi in *The Comforter*. They said that these couples express their feelings openly towards each other, even in front of their parents. There was divided opinion over the portrayal of Sister Shade. Some members described her as manipulative, controlling and arrogant. Others described her as open-minded woman who role-plays as a social actor for female emancipation. They said the patriarchal society such as Malawi needs her.

9. CHIKWAWA FOCUS GROUP

The key issue dominating the discussions in the Chikwawa Focus Group was the dress style of the female characters and members critically analysed female

representation in terms of how the female characters were dressed in these films. The central argument was whether the way they dress is a reflection of reality (in a Nigerian context) or not? They further critiqued whether the dressing styles make the characters representative of the ideal African woman or not?

Members were full of praise for the Queen Mother and Dubem in *Royal Fight* and Susan in *Mr & Mrs*. They stated that they are a symbol of 'real' African women. Participants cited Susan, Queen Mother and Dubem as exemplary, on one hand and Sister Shade as misleading, on the other hand. They stated that wearing trousers is not an ideal representation of African women's attire. Such attitudes and perceptions regarding how ideal Malawian/African women should dress is rooted to cultural and sociological background of this Chikwawa community.

There are two dominant ethnical cultural traditions that identify the community where participants lived in: the Senas and the Mang'anjas. Though these two are different ethnic groups, with opposing cultural practices, they both share similar conservative perceptions regarding male and female dressing styles. They consider wearing of trousers as unconventional for a woman and consider it exclusively for men. Gender ideology among the Mang'anja and Sena cultures gives males the license to argue with unmitigated rivalry. Sheldon (1997:227) states that girls and women do so at the risk of being called 'bossy', 'confrontational,' 'bitchy,' 'difficult,' 'big-headed,' or worse. Boys and men can show similar behaviour and garner praise for being 'manly,' 'strong,' or 'assertive.' The gender ideology across the Chikwawa community, like the rest of Malawian society, requires girls and

women to 'be nice', or risk censure from peers and adults. Sachs (1987) in Sheldon (1997) finds that preschool girls have already learned to say things with a smile, pursuing their agenda and interests within the constraint they have so as not to cause too much stress or jeopardise interpersonal harmony in their intimate groups. In communities in which there is a prescription that girls 'be nice,' and where friendship ties are a crucial source of their social status and inclusion, it is clear that girls must learn to skilfully negotiate 'niceness', or risk censure. Being 'nice' which for females often mean not being adversarial, is a norm that women are expected to adhere to, even if they have achieved institutionally derived status in African or Malawian societies (see Sheldon and Johnson, 1994: 40-41).

The participants' response can be understood and appreciated from the perspective of an Afro-centric concept of gender as discussed in chapter three of the thesis. Most Afro-centric scholars argue that African gender and social relations should be interpreted based on an African concept of gender and not on 'universal' notions (Familusi, 2012; Oyewumi, 1997; 2004). Amadiume (1987: 2000) contests that in African cultures, to be a women or man does not translate to being female or male. She intimates that there are socially and culturally constructed females who are perceived as men in their societies. Thus, she argues, there are male daughters and female fathers in traditional African societies.

Discussing *The Pastor's Wife*, male participants had no major issue with Sister Shade's way of dressing, however the female participants in this focus group expressed misgivings in her lifestyle especially regarding her dress style. They

described her as a woman who failed her husband and the community by failing to be exemplary to other women in the community. They accused her of over-exposing her body to the public. Male participants, however, were all full of admiration for Sister Shade's husband, Pastor James. They said that Pastor James is portrayed as a humble husband who is a loving and caring man to his troublesome wife. Women participants expressed their liking of Pastor James too. They said that he is an attentive and protective man that every woman would want to have as a husband.

Some of the younger female participants in the group expressed their admiration for Linda in *Mr & Mrs.* and considered her a role model. Linda is portrayed as a hard working class woman who excels at her work and is promoted to become a very senior executive in a multinational company. However, most elderly female participants condemned Linda as insensitive to her family. They stated that Linda was selfish and cared little about her husband and children in her pursuit of an ambitious career. They viewed her as not a worthy character to emulate.

In conclusion, focus discussions on female representation revealed several opinions that participants held of the case study films in particular and Nollywood films in general. The discussions indicate common elements associated with Nollywood in the participants' perspectives. Across all groups, the study reveals that participants patronised the films because they found the narratives or storylines meaningful to them. They indicated that the cultural portrayals in the films were identical to their own real life experiences. The study further reveals that such identical cultural experiences were embodied in the common belief in community over individualism.

Participants across the groups indicated that they were able to appreciate and celebrate the portrayal of *uMunthu* through characters in the films. This is the *uBuntu* philosophy and through its manifestation participants felt the films, despite some issues that some critics would point out regarding their quality and uncoordinated distribution and market system, remain the most popular among the participating audiences. Added to the above listed factors, the study reveals that the films were a source of education, inspiration to both male and female participants. The female discussants claimed that the main female characters of these films acted as role models to them in challenging male dominance in their own communities and families. Male discussants claimed that the films acted as teachers to them in redefining their relationship with female members of society and poignantly in redefining social relations with their female partners at home and in workplaces. (see Appendix 13: focus Groups Distribution on socio-cultural context)

Further to the above picture, the study reveals that focus groups had respective dominant themes that participants spent more time on than on others during the meetings. The study reveals that the Mangochi, Mabulabo and Ntchewu Focus Groups had dominant theme of cultural identity. In both groups the subtheme of *uBuntu* philosophy portrayed in female characters Dubem, Queen Mother, Amarachi, Mrs. Igwe and Susan was more recurring than other issues that came out. In this regard, the study reveals that the films' portrayals functioned as education and provided role models to the participants. Thus role-modelling and education were recurring themes in analysing responses of participants from the Mzimba, Lilongwe and Lunzu Focus Groups. The study suggests that the portrayal of the female

characters of Dubem, Queen Mother, Amarachi and Mrs. Igwe constitute role models to female participants. Likewise, the portrayal of some male characters like Henry, Ikenna and state governor Emezie was seen as as educative to them. The study reveals that participating female audiences got inspiration from fellow females in the films' characters. They boosted their confidence and made them feel equally important in a male dominated environment. The male characters' acted as education to the male viewer participants as they learned how to redefine and appropriate their social relations with their female partners. In return, the study indicates that male participants confessed to have some of their attitudes towards female members of society being revisited and moderated. The observation above agrees concurs the findings in Ugochukwu's (2013) which were based on a study among Nollywood audiences in Diaspora. Her research outcome suggests that the films have a moral tale to tell, hence, the videos do act as teachers. (see Appendix 13: focus Groups Distribution on socio-cultural context)

Added to the above findings, the study reveals that participants from Kanengo, Ntchewu and Nkhatabay Focus Groups had spent more time in discussing the issue of what constitutes an African woman. Thus, the notion of an ideal Malawian or African woman dominated discussions across these groups than any other issue. Lastly, participants from Chikwawa Focus Group were more particular with the issue of dressing in African woman. The study reveals that participants in this group spent more time in defining their notion of African woman in relation to the clothes they felt an ideal African woman ought to wear. Almost all participants in this group based their notion of the ideal African woman were in opposition to the dressing

style of Sister Shade. They dismissed Sister Shade's choice of dressing as not representative of the ideal African woman. (see Appendix 3: Summary of Transcript of Focus Group Discussions)

However, the study reveals conflicting opinions over the portrayal of some female characters within and across some focus groups. Participants within Kanengo, Ntchewu and Lunzu Focus Groups held differing opinions regarding female representation of some of the key female characters. Characters such as Sister Shade, Dubem, Susan, Amarachi, Adanma and Linda attracted lengthy debates among the participants during the meetings. Some participants argued that these characters are exemplary and acted as role models to them. They further stated that these female characters gave a picture of an ideal African woman. It must be noted that some participants within the groups held contrary opinion. They stated that the characters had some weaknesses or deficiencies in them that ruled them out from being considered as role models or ideal African women. They cited the picture of Sister Shade as divisive and controversial. They further described the portrayal of other female characters of Dubem, Amarachi, Linda, Adanma and Susan as conflicting. Almost all participants agreed that only the Queen Mother came out without being faulted.

Further to the above observation, there were significant differences in opinions across the focus groups. Focus groups such as Lilongwe, Kanengo, Mangochi, Lunzu and Ntchewu came out responses with significant differences from their counterparts in Chikwawa, Mabulabo, Nkhatabay and Mzimba. This could largely

be attributed to cultural, social and demographic factors. Social factors could include that the first block of focus groups were located in urban and semi-urban locations and hence, members were more exposed to other worldviews, education and had great number of working class or business people in them. In other words, they had members from predominantly middle working class. Members in this block of focus groups came from different cultural backgrounds. The other block of focus groups such as Chikwawa, Nkhatabay, Mabulabo and Mzimba were the dominantly rural based with most members having little or no formal education background. In other words, most members from the rural-based groups were not exposed to other worldviews as opposed to the counterparts from the semi-urban and urban based.

Other than cultural, educational, sociological, demographic and religious factors as stated above, age factor contributed significantly to participants debate on the portrayal of women in the films. Lilongwe focus groups comprised young people of all the groups and they held contrary views to most of the groups regarding the portrayals. For instance, when it comes to their judgement on Sister Shade's conduct, they stated that had liberal life style was crucial as a model to other women. The same was observed in Ntchewu Focus Group, which was divided between parents and children. Parents held more conservative views on Sister shade whilst their children, regardless of sex differences held a more liberal view on her. Children, took the same stand as their fellow young participants of Lilongwe Focus Group. (See Appendix 3: Transcript of a summary of Focus Group Discussions; Appendix 13: Focus Group Distribution on Socio-Cultural Context)

The next discussion presents summary of themes emerging in this chapter. These themes will be critical in the discussion chapters that follow this chapter.

SUMMARY OF THE THEMES EMERGING FROM FOCUS GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses major themes that emerged in my analysis of the focus groups. These themes are crucial in chapters six to nine as they form a discussion component of the findings. There are sub-themes emerging from these major themes that will be subjects of discussions in chapters six to nine.

In brief, the section highlights culture as one of the central themes that emerged during the focus group discussions. The section also notes that militancy is another themes that emerges from the discussions. The study notes that some female characters display militant approaches to their life styles in a way this act as a defence mechanism or a way of maintaining their rights and dignity. This inspired female audience participants and hence an aspect to emulate. Sister Shade, Dubem and Adanma were singled out for this militancy display. Cultural identity was also crucial and contributed to argaubaly successful debate on characters across and within focus groups. Participants were motivated to watch and follow the films and discussed them because the films portray some cultural practices and beliefs that are similar to their own. The narratives and general backgrounds of the scenes were

somehow identical to the participants. Following cultural identity and militancy is the theme of uBuntu. Ubuntu or uMunthu philosophy characterised the similarities between the viewers and the characters. It simply means to be humane and this is central to African understanding of life that is revolved around one's community or extended family ties. It was a reference point on the debate around the ideal African woman.

Though participants had contrary views on what constitute Africanness or foreignness but the element of uBuntu was unanimously agreed as the basis of their opinion. Subjectivity also emerged as an important theme. Participants within and across focus groups gave subjective responses to the films' portrayal of females owing to their differences in cultural, educational, social and demographic backgrounds as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Lastly, the theme of stereotype emerged during the discussions. Some participants stereotyped against some characters life style and this was a reflection of how Malawian society judge women with libera views like Adanma and Sister Shade. However some participants deplored the way other characters stereotyped against fellow characters in the films. For instance, some participants condemned church women in *The Pastor's Wife* for their prejudices against Sister Shade. They further condemned Hussein's people for stereotyping against Adanma in *Not With My Daughter*.

THEMES

Cultural Identity

In general, audiences reacted differently to female representations in the films. First and foremost are the cultural similarities across all the films' characters and also between the audiences and the characters. They noted that the case study films portray similar or obvious domestic issues common across all the plots which are also familiar to all viewers. An example is *Not With My Daughter* whose main feature is the failed inter-marriages due to religious and cultural differences. Audiences observed that marriages between Moslems and Christians rarely survive due to conflicting cultural demands that each one of these two 'rival' religious institutions ask of their followers. Audiences further observed that one's family background plays a crucial role in the sustainability of most marriages. They argued that intermarriages between children from poor and rich families rarely survive and if they do, the spouse from the poorer background suffers abuse from his or her partner. They observed that it is obvious that Kenneth and Susan marriage cannot survive because one of them comes from a very rich family while the other comes from a very poor background. They argued that no matter how much the rich family pretend, one day they openly insult the poor spouse. Thus, there are numerous examples of such cases as the one in *Mr & Mrs* where the mother influences her son to leave his wife for another woman whom they think would make him happy. The study therefore identifies that class is crucial in the social relations between male and female partners.

Militancy

In addition to cultural similarities, audiences noted that the dialogues portray an element of militancy across the plots. They cited Adanma, Susan, Amarachi, Sister Shade and Mrs. Igwe as examples of characters who, despite facing marginalisation and challenges for being women and low class, go ahead to demand their liberty in their own way. The audiences pointed out that this is where their own Malawian experiences are different from Nigerian experiences. This suggests that the films could be effective tool to behavioural changes among Malawian audiences, especially their attitude towards women. This is the starting point of the research. The study therefore argues that there is potential for Malawian audiences, especially women audiences, to adopt Nigerian women's militant approaches to demanding a greater balance regarding gender and social relations.

uBuntu/ Umunthu

Another significant observation is the issue of identity. Participants indicated that the dialogues in the films reflect that characters across the plots, despite some traces of difference among them, have a common denominator of identity. They said characters were all black, Africans and shared a similar way of reacting to situations with emotion, empathy, compassion, sharing, community mindedness and extended families. They stated that films like *The Comforter*, *Royal Fight* and *Last Vote* portray women as compassionate. Thus the audiences identified this commonality within the philosophy of uBuntu which the audiences referred to as uMunthu. The

audiences stated that the portrayal of uMunthu in the film dialogues exemplifies their own approach to life.

Subjectivity

Despite the commonalities and differences noted among characters and also those aspects noted between the audiences and the characters, the participants offered varying responses to the film dialogues. For instances, particular audiences reacted differently to Sister Shade's portrayal: some applauded her and others deplored her. The same applies to Adanma: some praised her and some criticised her conduct. The responses to the portrayals were informed by various contextual factors such as education, culture, class, religion, age, ethnicity, gender and location just to mention a few.

Stereotypes

Lastly, the study notes that participants across all the focus groups failed to come out clear with woman to woman sexual or gender oppression that was a hallmark of sexual, gender, class, cultural and religious stereotypes. Participants managed to identify selected or individual cases of woman to woman oppression and they further identified the source of such relation which was largely due to the factors listed above. For instance, the portrayal of Susan' oppression by Kenneth's mother as discussed elsewhere in *Mr & Mrs* has been due to class stereotypes and the same can be said of Amarachi by Henry's aunt and mother in *The Comforter*. Further to this, the oppression of Adanma by Hussein's mother in *Not With My Daughter* has been attributed to cultural and religious stereotypes that have their basis in sexual and

gender stereotypes. However, none of the participating individual or group came out clearly to analyse the basis of woman to woman oppression beyond the given sexual and gender stereotypes. Chapter nine will discuss the implication of this category of oppression and its implication to scholarly efforts to identify and define the continental notion of gender across all African societies.

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

With reference to a summary of transcript in the Appendix: This chapter has provided two types of data analysis: film based analysis using Kozloff (2000) dialogue theory and focus group analysis using discourse, cultural and other semiotic analytical tools. Both film based data serve to lay a base for the analysis of the primary data from the focus groups. The chapter has identified several findings that have emerged into themes and subthemes. These themes and sub-themes inform central discussion of the thesis in chapters six, seven, eight and nine..

The next chapters (6, 7 and 8) in Part IV of the thesis will therefore discuss the study findings as they emerged in themes. The following central themes have so far been identified: identity, subjectivity and appropriation. These themes are further sub-themed: identity is sub-themed into *uBuntu* philosophy and cultural hegemony; subjectivity is sub-themed into African-ness and gender relations; appropriation is further sub-themed into educative and role-modelling.

PART IV

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Anecdote

It only took me ten minutes to walk along the Devil Street, at the heart of Malawi's Capital, Lilongwe. My cultural experience was illuminating: the word or phrase Oga was one of those phrases that my ears could not miss in the noisy street. It was vendors, local vendors selling assorted wares along this street, echoing this phrase. Then I travelled to the south of Malawi to my base, the commercial city, Blantyre, a week later. Again, I had another sort of cultural experience. One morning I visited my favourite barber in Limbe. I noted that the women working in the salon which shares the same room with gentleman who worked on my hair had a field day. As they were idle waiting for the next client, they were never short of stories about this one and about that one...a little gossip made up for the idle Thursday morning. But it was none of my business till the word Chineke came from nowhere in the middle of their conversation. To the satisfaction of my curiosity, they kept on mentioning Chineke. Later that weekend I visited my home village, Berewu. My trading centre village is situated 50 kilometres away from Blantyre down the Shire Valley. On the eve of my departure, I decide to visit my old local pub for a cold drink with my brothers. I joined the conversation about the local and national politics just like everybody else around the vicinity. We were into the elections year then and politics dominated national discourse everywhere. Nothing was out of the ordinary, business as usual till I heard the word Igwe from a long time childhood friend in reference to another senior friend who also came to visit the village from town that weekend. Elsewhere I travelled, I noted some little but noticeable elements in cultural aspects. At wedding reception, I noticed women dressed in imposing attire befitting the occasion, from top to bottom. They simply called it Nigerian style. And such Nigerian style is seen in men's attire as well. The list would go on..... All what I saw was a reflection of what I see in the characters in Nollywood movies. I

had an opportunity to find out from some of the people and they did confirmed that they learned or imitated the characters in the Nigerian made movies. I didn't take their response on face value. I told myself that we have some Nigerians in Malawi scattered in towns of Blantyre and Malawi doing business. But they are by far very few and the fact that we have none of them staying in my village makes these unofficial informants' claim apparently undisputable. (extract from field notes, Chimbuto, 2012-2013).

The extract above is a collection of my experiences of Nollywood film audiences in Malawi during my field visit between 2012 and 2013. As the extract shows, the emergence of Nollywood films on the local market for now more than a decade has been accompanied by traces of Nigerian life style or cultural manifestations. My investigation in the field suggests that Nollywood is responsible for such traces of Nigerian cultural aspects among its audiences in Malawi. There are pockets of evidence to suggest that Nigerian cultures are influencing Malawian cultures. I personally witnessed the extent to which some aspects of Nigerian cultures are slowly but surely becoming part of Malawian socio-linguistics and part of their informal identity, albeit in a very small way for the period up to 2015.

The experience summarised in the anecdote above serves to suggest that although the study focused on assessing the potential of Nollywood's influence in relation to its portrayal of women, seemingly, the films are already tangibly influencing Malawi in the cultural aspects of the consuming local audiences. Such cultural aspects include language and dress among very few others.

While this evidence may seem overwhelmingly anecdotal, and although the above extract of my collection of field notes is based on a small population size compared

to the national population, it is nevertheless representative. It is based on my experiences across all the country's regions, involving major cities and rural areas. The sample size of the study may not guarantee the conclusion that Nollywood has had an impact on all Nollywood films' audiences in Malawi, it nonetheless suggests that the films have a potential to influence audiences' lifestyle.

This discussion section of the study findings is divided into four chapters: chapters six, seven, eight and nine. The chapters will discuss the main themes emerging from the findings of the study following the data analysis as detailed in chapter five of the thesis. Chapter six will discuss the theme of identity and its relevance to audiences' interpretation of female representation in Nollywood films. The theme of identity will be discussed through the sub-themes: uBuntu and cultural hegemony. Chapter seven will consider the theme of subjectivity and its implication for audiences' responses to the portrayals of women in Nollywood films. The chapter is further divided into sub-themes: African-ness and gender relations. Chapter eight will discuss the theme of appropriation and its relevance to the potential for Nollywood's influence on Malawian audiences. The theme of appropriation will be ably discussed under sub-themes of education and role-modelling as a case in point. Chapter nine will discuss the implications of the study findings. There are sections and sub-sections that have topical discursive issues to demonstrate the extent to which the films have the potential to influence social change in terms of the public perception of women. Therefore, these discussions begin with the theme of identity in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 IDENTITY

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AUDIENCES' REACTION TO REPRESENTATION IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

INTRODUCTION

Identity is a dominant theme that emerged during audiences' discussion of female representation in Nollywood films. As this chapter demonstrates, many respondents indicated that the films' general narratives have much in common with audiences' lived experiences. They observed that the actors, the landscape and infrastructure resemble that of Malawi. Arguably, what attracted them most to these films are the identical cultural aspects between those portrayed in the films and the audiences' real life everyday cultural experiences. Many respondents cited religious symbols, traditional customs that border on marriage, kinship, traditional medicine and witchcraft or *juju* as common cultural elements between them.

While some respondents indicated that they were not passionate about some aspects of cultural manifestations such as *juju*, they felt that the films deal with real life cultural experiences. Audiences explored to what extent local Malawian women are represented and their similarities or differences with their counterparts in Nigeria. The following extract from one of the respondents is a case in point regarding how

the respondents found commonalities between themselves and Nigerian actors, especially the female characters. This underlines the theme of cultural identity between them:

1. We see the actors, they look like us. The stories these films show are similar to our own stories. The market places, the villages and the problems the people face in the Nigerian films are what we too confront on an everyday basis. Poverty, corruption, witchcraft, marriage and love wrangles and you name it. Everything we watch in Nigerian films it is like we are watching our own communities. We even forget that its fiction....it feels real. No, no more these Chinese films and what have you. E-yah Nigerian films or no films. (A 27 year old second hand clothes vendor female respondent from Lunzu Focus Group, 2013)

This chapter, therefore, discusses audiences' responses to female representation in Nollywood films. On one hand, the chapter looks at how the audiences interpreted and analysed the films' portrayal of women in the Nigerian made films. On the other hand, the respondents analysed how these portrayals are similar to or different from their counterparts in Malawi, the site of these films' consumption. The chapter further discusses how such portrayals are relevant to the theme of identity as per the audience's reaction to the films. The chapter explores female representation in the films basing its analysis on two sub-themes: *uBuntu* and cultural hegemony. Throughout the discussions, the chapter analyses how the female portrayals and audiences' responses are relevant to the concept of continentalisation in respect to the commonalities and differences identified in the cultures between the host nation, Nigeria and the recipient nation, Malawi.

The chapter is divided as follows: Firstly, it discusses the *uBuntu* philosophy in Section I. As introduced in chapter three of the thesis, *uBuntu* philosophy is a common notion or concept within African discourse which is based on the spirit of being humane, selfless, generous or humble. It is based on ethical or moral teachings of altruism as opposed to egoism within the African social context (Malunga, 2009). The philosophy of *uBuntu* is defined within a specific cultural framework and in this respect, a common African cultural framework. However, what constitutes common African culture or not is subject to contestation and this chapter, by referring to female representation in Nollywood films, makes an attempt to demonstrate the homogeneous African cultural aspects that are relevant across Africa. Section II discusses these identical cultural representations between Malawi and Nigeria as presented in the films. The section makes an attempt to articulate the significance of such cultural relevance to Malawian audiences' understanding of female portrayals in these Nigerian made films.

SECTION ONE

UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

A CONTINENTAL IDENTITY CHARACTERISING AFRICA’S SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

uBuntu is a Nguni Bantu term literally meaning “human-ness” or “human kindness” (Battle, 1997). It is generally translated as being “human towards others”, but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Khomba, 2009). Malunga (2009) defines *uBuntu* philosophy as the concept of sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges. He posits that most indigenous African societies believe in taking collective responsibility:

Children are seen as children of the community rather than belonging to their parents only. Clan households collectively meet responsibilities such as school fees and other expenses for the children. Those in privileged positions take it as their responsibility to help the less privileged to rise to the position of privilege as well. (ibid: 3)

The quote above and the quote at the opening of this discussion ably summarise the concept of *uBuntu* as defined, understood and practised among African communities. The first quote “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,” signifies how an individual values and is interdependent on others around him or her in an African context (Mbiti, 1969). The second quote further illustrates how, without other people or the community, life can become an impossibility in an African context. The quote is a manifestation that prosperity, and life itself is possible, not

because of one's personal efforts or talent but due to the contributions others have made to an individual's life beginning in childhood.

It is the understanding of the notion of *uBuntu* that is crucial to interpret Malawian audiences' reaction to female representation in Nollywood films. Many respondents indicated that they take pleasure in watching most of the films because of the characters' manifestation of the *uBuntu* philosophy. They stated that the display of *uBuntu* in the films resonates with Malawian beliefs and approach to life. They contended that the films' narratives have general moral messages that are educative to the audiences. This therefore suggests that it is as a result of this cultural relevance that Malawian audiences find pleasure in watching Nollywood films on a regular basis.

Despite criticism against the films' overall aesthetic deficiencies, the moral narratives present in most of the plots provide an incentive for Malawian audiences to watch them. Most often, irrespective of the genre, the films' narratives have a personal and direct appeal to their local audiences in Malawi similar to the folklore tradition. Films such as *The Last Vote* (2001), *Royal Fight* (2011) and *The Comforter* (2009) are cases in point in this respect. The outlined films present female characters whose heroism underpins the application of the *uBuntu* concept in Malawi's social, cultural and moral discourse.

uBuntu Philosophy and representation of women in *The Last Vote* (2001), *Royal Fight*, (2011) and *The Comforter* (2009)

Market Women Association as social actors in *The Last Vote* (2001)

First, it is important to note the role of women in the manifestation of *uBuntu* philosophy in the *The Last Vote* (2001). As presented in chapter one of the thesis, respondents indicated that the film portrays the selfless spirit, compassion and love. They stated that the spirit demonstrated by the film's characters led by Mrs. Igwe is similar to their own approach to life. This suggests that both the producing and consuming nations, in this case Nigeria and Malawi, share a similar philosophy to life. Malawian female audiences participating in the study applauded the heroic act of their female counterparts who they said exemplify Nigerian women. This can be seen in the following comment by a 39 year old Community Day Secondary School female teacher from the Kanengo Focus Group:

2. Whatever the mess that took place in the government: corruption and all sorts of things...oh yes! Organised killings come to an abrupt end. Life changes for the better. They may be underestimated but in this film the role market women have displayed is phenomenal. They are saviours. (Respondent from Kanengo Focus Group, 2013)

Such portrayals of women are manifested through or in various discourses (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough defines discourse as ways of representing aspects of the world; the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. He acknowledges that discourse analysis can be used to examine various aspects of representations in the social and public

life. Fairclough attests that the plight of women in society is represented through different discourses in the social practices of government, politics, medicine, and social sciences.

In relation to the role female characters play in the film, Fairclough's postulation alludes to the recognition that social practices are manifested in various forms in the films: activities, values, knowledge, belief and social relations.

It is worth noting that the *Last Vote* (2001) re-lives the memory of the uprising of Nigerian women against British Laws in 1929 and 1946 (Dike, 1995). In what is referred to as the Aba Market Women uprising, in 1929 thousands of south-eastern Nigerian women organised a massive revolt against taxation policies imposed on market women (Ibid). They used song and dance as a medium to ridicule and denounce the establishment. There were scenes of aggression and looting as women aimed their attacks at British-owned stores, banks and other facilities of colonial power such as the courts (Ibid). As a consequence, some of the chiefs, who were acting on behalf of the colonial power, were forced to resign (Kent et al., 2011). The colonial authorities were compelled to revoke their intended imposition of taxes (Ibid). A similar uprising took place in 1946 in Abeokuta in western Nigeria when market women protested over arbitrary colonial taxes and the apparent failure of chiefs to address their grievances (Paddock & Falola, 2011). Thus, the film under discussion reflects women as social actors in the real life historical situation of Nigeria as depicted in the account of the protests by the Aba and Abeokuta market women.

Responses among audiences who watched this film suggest that viewers, especially female viewers, found the female characters in this film militant and liberating. Thus the audiences indicated that they found their bravery inspiring and motivating. They stated that despite some digressions in some of the plots, they found the overall portrayal of female characters a manifestation of *uBuntu* philosophy. They noted that the action of market women in *The Last Vote* was motivated by passion, love and care for the vulnerable women at the ante-natal clinic and for the nation at large. Innocent citizens apparently were being held at ransom by greedy politicians who were baying for the state governor's head following his stance to fight corruption. Respondents commented that the display of compassion, empathy and humility as showcased in *The Last Vote* bears the general character of Malawian woman.

However, what marks the distinction between Malawian women and their Nigerian counterparts is the militant approach that characters in the film display which is a reflection of the reaction of both the Aba and Abeokuta market women in response to British imposed tax as discussed earlier in the section. Generally, Malawian women are withdrawn and passive to react to any form of sexual harassment or male domination. Their manifestation of *uBuntu* may be different from their Nigerian counterparts:- rather than being militant, they often manifest love, care, compassion and support to apparent victims or hopeless situation. In contrast, their Nigerian counterparts, as portrayed in the film, manifest *uBuntu* in a militant approach to challenge the authorities to be responsive to the needs of the less privileged. This therefore makes a case why Malawian female audiences could benefit from watching the films. Thus, by emulating the way the film

characters respond to oppressive situations as in *Last Vote*, Malawian women audiences could individually and collectively challenge any form of subjugation they are subjected to in homes and in institutions. In the process, the films could be acting as agents of social change in Malawian women audiences (Fairclough, 1992).

The heroics of the Queen Mother and Dubem in *Royal fight* (2011)

In response to the film *Royal Fight* (2011), most participants commented that the king's actions are a good example of *uBuntu* philosophy. Respondents felt that the film, through its portrayal of the characters Dubem and the Queen Mother, highlights the aspect of empathy which they argued is one of the pillars of *uBuntu*. One respondent gave her analytical account of the character of the Queen Mother:

3. The Queen as a mother is throughout outstanding, offering leadership in the royal household in the absence of the ailing king. She is impartial, makes sound judgement and is protective of the members of the royal family indiscriminately. Also, as a family, she and the king adopted an outsider to become their son and treats him as their first born, nobody knows that he is not a biological son till it is revealed at a later stage in his life. He was treated as equal to their biological son. (A 33 year old housewife from Mzimba Focus Group, 2013)

It is not only the characterisation of the Queen Mother that the audiences praise here, but also Dubem. Respondents applauded her lovely, loyal and generous spirit, attributes that earned her respect and affection among members of the royal household.

4. Although she is a bit young she behaves maturely, I see her as a compassionate woman. She treats each and every one with dignity. Her sister-in-marriage harasses and ridiculed her over her childless situation. As the reigning Queen, tradition allows her to evict her

out of the royal household but she forgives her. (18 year old first year university student- male respondent from Ntchewu)

The excerpts in (3) and (4) above give an account of attributes of *uBuntu* in the two female characters from the perspectives of the respondents. As can be seen extract (4), Dubem is compassionate, a good listener and adviser. Such a disposition arguably identifies her with *uBuntu* philosophy. The respondents are attracted by the humility portrayed in the two characters and relate it to an act of *uBuntu*. Thus, the disposition of the two female characters represents the common characteristics of women in Malawian society. As such Dubem and the Queen Mother in this film are undoubtedly seen as agents of a dominant African philosophy *uBuntu*. This is due down to the fact that the attributes that the characters manifest have moral, social and personal meanings to the audiences' sense of belonging. Thus, the female portrayal in the film reflects the values that the particular viewers participating in the study share in society. With this example, it is likely that female audiences would emulate such a portrayal and become the agents of *uBuntu* philosophy which is a Pan-Africanist way of life. Hence, in this way, *uBuntu* can potentially become a continental cultural and social identity that could characterise women in Africa.

The heroine in *The Comforter* (2009)

The Comforter is another example of a film that is a manifestation of *uBuntu* philosophy. To remind the reader, in the film, Amarachi, a young woman from a poor background is given a job. She turns things around and wins the favour of her employer, who in return introduces her to his son, Henry. The two get along well and become lovers. When Henry's aunt visits the family, things go sour; a long held

secret is revealed. The aunt accuses Amarachi of killing her son, an ex-boyfriend from years ago. Amarachi runs away and her world collapses; she loses her job and her love. She leans on her spiritual father, a Catholic Church priest whom she tells everything. Later, the aunt is involved in a car accident and she is dying from loss of blood. Amarachi is the one who saves her by donating blood although she does not want her beneficiary to know her identity.

Respondents describe the girl's gesture as the epitome of *uBuntu* philosophy. They argue that the character manifests an altruistic spirit: forgiveness, sacrifice, generosity and good will. A 27 year old female respondent working as a Health Surveyor Assistant in Mangochi observed:

5. This is the woman who ruined her future. This is the woman who made her lose her job and lose her home. This is the woman who did not even give her an opportunity to explain herself or defend herself before Henry and his family about what happened that led to the death of her former lover, Henry's cousin, and so many years back. She forgave her. (Respondent from Mangochi Focus Group)

To sum up the discussion in this section, according to respondents' comments, the actions of the leading female characters in *The Royal Fight*, *The Last Vote* and *The Comforter* exemplify the *uBuntu* approach to life. As previously mentioned, the reaction of the audiences involved in this study is one of applauding the heroics of female characters. In the films, *The Royal Fight*, *The Last Vote* and *The Comforter*, women are showcased as symbols of peace, forgiveness, love, understanding, friendship and empathy. This alludes to Malunga's (2009) notion that *uBuntu* makes those in privileged positions responsible to help the less privileged, who in return

also rise to a position of privilege. In these films women take centre stage in communicating the moral teachings to the community. The heroic portrayal of women is significant in a way that they have arguably managed to deconstruct the female stereotype and instead the portrayal has reconstructed a high opinion and regard for women. In this way, respondents' attitude and perception towards women could be seen as changing for the better.

However, it is worth noting that some respondents expressed reservations at the portrayal of some female (supporting) characters, for instance, Henry's aunt in *The Comforter* and Dubem's sister-in-marriage, Sarama in *Royal Fight*. These characters present a dull portrayal of women. A 27 year old housewife from the Mabulabo Focus Group is among the very few participants who expressed concern over the representation of some of the supporting characters in the film:

6. That woman is a witch. Her visit to the family was destructive. She destroyed the innocent girl's life.

And a 41 year old male farmer respondent from the same focus group was critical of Dubem's sister-in- marriage:

7. I don't appreciate her role in the film in the first place. She gives the impression of someone who is childish and jealous. I think she was after Dubem's husband.

Beyond the audiences' responses, female characters are in the shadow of the male characters. For instance, in the film *The Last Vote*, the heroics of the women of the Market Association are overshadowed by the 'imposing' male character, the president, who gets all the credit for the change. He dismisses the cabinet and arrests the corrupt officials and things change for the better. Unfairly, though not unusually,

the women who play a crucial role in pressurising the president and saving him from impeachment got little appreciation for their effort from the respondents. Rather, it is the state governor who steals the show and was applauded by the audience. Likewise, the heroics of the Queen Mother and Dubem in *Royal Fight* are obscured by the presence and action of the male characters in the plot: the king who ordered the son to marry the girl from an unknown background. The king is seen as the defender of the weak in society and hence a hero in this regard. Thirdly, female characters are further overshadowed in *The Comforter*. Unlike the previous two films, there is no male character to obscure the main female character but rather it is the tragic end that dominates the film narrative. After her heroics at her workplace and the hospital (see synopsis in Section 9.0 in chapter 1), Amarachi resorts to suicide out of despair in the end.

In conclusion, the respondents suggest that, the leading female characters in *The Comforter*, *Royal Fight* and *The Last Vote* have the ability to present the image of the modern African woman who can challenge the existing beliefs and attitudes that relegate females to an inferior position. The discussion has shown how the manifestation of *uBuntu* by Malawian women most often works to their disadvantage as it arguably encourages male social dominance. It can be contended that the present conventional approach that Malawian women take to manifest *uBuntu* is often characterised with less militant strategies ends up subjecting them as victims of male social dominance as men and authorities (mostly dominated by men) look at them as an easy target for oppression. However, through the characters such as Mrs. Igwe and her fellow women in *Last Vote*, the discussion demonstrates that

the adoption of militant strategies in manifesting *uBuntu* could possibly alleviate the plight of women subjected to male oppression based on sexual stereotypes. Further, with inspiration from characters such as Susan, Linda, Dubem and the Queen Mother, Malawian women may have the potential to challenge male dominance in various forms. This could result in shaping the public perception of women and, hence, be regarded as equal to men.

Based on the above discussion, this thesis attests that *uBuntu* philosophy is a cultural belief and practice that is identical across sub-Saharan Africa. One could therefore contest that *uBuntu*, being a dominant cultural phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa, has lived in the shadow of global cultures that has seen it failing to put its mark on the continent. However, this thesis contends that the emergence of Nollywood industry, more widely recognised as Africa's largest film producer, *uBuntu* is likely to become a continental cultural identity, migrating from one form of *uBuntu* to another form. Hence, it is likely to result in a continental representation of *uBuntu* which could easily be localised to respond to the needs of the local situations. Thus, I would argue that *uBuntu* philosophy is one of the common cultural products that define continentalisation in Africa. Further to this, the representation of women in the films makes *uBuntu* stand out as an African cultural philosophy that demonstrates the significance of African women in changing society for the benefit of everyone. The films, as a vehicle of continentalisation, have the potential to change public perception of women.

As observed throughout the discussion in this section, *uMunthu* or *uBuntu* does not operate in isolation but rather it is an attribute of culture. In other words, *uBuntu* philosophy characterises a common cultural aspect that embodies love, compassion, forgiveness and selflessness across African communities. The issue of cultural representation therefore emerged as an integral aspect of identity between Malawian cultural practitioners and their Nigerian counterparts as suggested in their films. Cultural representation therefore emerges as a sub-theme associated with *uBuntu* philosophy in relation to the central theme of identity. The next section discusses the relevance of cultural identity between the two sites: the producing site, and the consuming site. The section further discusses the relevance of such cultural identity to the understanding of the concept of continentalisation.

SECTION TWO

CULTURAL HEGEMONY

CULTURAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MALAWI AN COMMUNITIES TO NOLLYWOOD FILM CASTING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AUDIENCES' INTERPRETATION OF REPRESENTATION IN THESE FILMS

Respondents discussed several ways in which Malawian cultures are identical to Nigerian cultures. For example, most respondents indicated that they identify with the display of witchcraft or *juju* in most Nollywood films. Malawians believe in the existence of witchcraft and whenever illness, death or curse strikes any member of the family, clan or community, the bereaved or victimised family blame someone else around them for it. Audiences stated that Nigerian films present similar cultural manifestations. *Juju* is now common in most of the films they watch. The films have several plots portraying female characters using *juju* to secure or save their sentimental relationships or marriage. A 58 year old female respondent, a retired primary school teacher, from Mzimba, observed that:

8. I rarely finish watching a film without any plot featuring the juju thing. Without that is not a Nigerian film. (Respondent from Mzimba Focus Group, 2013)

Many participants observed that cultural relevance is the most appealing factor in films. For instance, in *Royal Fight*, they attested that Dubem lives up to the audience's expectation of the traditional extended marriage. Dubem is the ideal royal

wife. She is portrayed as a caring woman to her in-laws. As Queen, she follows the footsteps of the Queen Mother in assuming leadership roles in the royal household as a mother of the compound. She does so with confidence but at the same time with a great sense of humility. She is also loyal to her husband, the youthful king, Ikenna. Respondents stated that she exemplifies how wives of traditional African or Malawian rulers ought to conduct themselves in their private and public lives. A 52 year old male respondent of Nkhatabay Focus Group describes Dubem as an epitome of ideal wife:

9. As a man, you cannot ask for more in Dubem as a wife.
(Respondent from Nkhatabay Focus Group, 2013)

Just like *Royal Fight* which highlights relations in extended family structures in traditional African communities, *Mr & Mrs* is a film which respondents believed exposes the problems experienced in extended families. They compared the film portrayal to their own backgrounds. The film demonstrates how Susan's marriage to Ken is ruined by the husband's mother who intrudes into the young couple's family affairs. The mother is being portrayed as giving bad advice to her son. She is believed to encourage Ken to divorce his wife for a new wife. Respondents reacted in acknowledging that these are common problems facing women across Malawian communities. The situation is more problematic in strictly patriarchal patrilineal cultural marriages as this 36 year old female respondent from Mzimba Focus Group attested in 2013:

10. I have no say in my family. Not even with my children. They belong to them {to husband's family}. My husband has a final say...and if he dies or he is away...my in-laws have to make a

decision. That's our custom here. Nothing in this film is out of order for me. Susan is just a tail {subordinate} in her husband's family home. Just like every woman in this room is unless those of you are from Chewa or South.

Extract (10) above echoes previous observations, and it supports the assertion that women are generally disempowered across communities in Malawi. There are similarities between marriage experiences of Malawian and Nigerian women. In essence, this respondent (10) claims that women in patrilineal communities are more subjected to subjugation than their counterparts in matrilineal communities. Part of the last sentence of the extract "...unless those of you are from Chewa or South..." confirms the belief that women from matrilineal communities have less patriarchal interference than their patrilineal counterparts (White, 2010). Such an assertion is easily confirmed in Malawian society. The northern region of Malawi, where the above respondent hailed from, is strictly patriarchal. The central and most parts of the southern region are predominantly matrilineal. Ideally, under this system, the man leaves his family and lives with the wife's family. The Chewa, an ethnic group predominantly in the central region of Malawi, practises a matrilineal cultural marriage system. Under this system, the man leaves his family and lives with the wife's family (Kathewere et. al., 2011).

When it comes to the audiences' interpretation of the films, it was generally agreed that the film mirrors practices and beliefs that are common in Malawian communities: submissiveness, unquestionable loyalty and obedience to the husband. The notion of a woman as a good house keeper is also lauded. Textual analysis of *Mr & Mrs* demonstrates these ideas and supports the claims of the respondents in

extract (10) above. For instance, Susan works very hard to please her husband by spending most of her time preparing the best food for him, who, in the latter days, seems not to care. She confines herself to the house and is available whenever her husband chooses to come home. She follows all instructions given to her by her mother-in-law. Ken's mother's superiority complex over Susan can be deduced from the body or physical language in their interactions (see Te Molder and Potter, 2005). Furthermore, Ken's mother uses disrespectful language whenever she addresses Susan. Ken's mother looks down on her and avoids her face: seemingly a sign of disrespect (see McCarthy and Carter, 1994).

Conflicts which arise in intercultural or interreligious marriages are portrayed in the films and are another area that respondents found relevant in their social context. They noted that *Not With My Daughter* presents similar experiences. In the film, Hussein and Ada are a happy young family living in town. However, things change when Hussein deceives his wife into relocating to his family home in the rural area of Northern Nigeria. It was obvious that his wife could not endorse the re-location for two reasons:- Firstly, it was in a remote location and Ada was born and grew up in the city, so she could see it being problematic for her; secondly, the cultural difference would be too much for her to bear as well. The couple moves to the north and problems arising from cultural and religious differences were inevitable.

While at Hussein's family home, it is clear that the culture and lifestyle is very different from Ada's upbringing. Ada is a Christian from the urban location of Southern Nigeria. Hussein is a Moslem from the rural location of Northern Nigeria.

Ada cannot cope with the demands and expectations of her in the extended family and the marriage breaks down. A tragedy follows as Hussein is killed in a fight over his daughter. Ada and her visiting sister want to take the daughter away from Hussein's family house to the city where Ada's family lives. Respondents concluded that the film is a reflection of failed marriages resulting from differences in cultural and religious ideologies. A 35 year old male respondent who is a businessman from Lunzu Focus Group agrees with the above assertion in sharing his personal experience in 2013:

11. I am a Christian and I was dating a Moslem girl for four years but her people refused to discuss with my people a marriage arrangement for two years. They simply cannot take it. To them it did not occur that I could marry their child...haram! This film is a painful reminder of this sad story of mine....err. It is happening. It happened before me. It happened to me. And am I the only one?

Textual analysis of *Not With My Daughter* supports the view of this participant. Throughout the film, Ada is treated as an outcast by Hussein's family. She is frequently referred to as an outcast by members of Hussein's family including Hussein's second wife, Adijah. The fact that Hussein's and Ada's union does not survive supports the claim that the issue of inter-religious/inter-cultural marriage remains unresolved in the real world in Nigeria and is mirrored in their films. Similar situations occur in Malawi. This suggests the reason why Malawian audiences are attracted to Nollywood films. Hussein manipulates his wife to achieve his goal which in the end leaves her alienated. She is left with no choice but to manage her predicament. The action by Hussein exposes the common problem of social male dominance in African societies. This manifests the bridge in power

relations between men and women that African societies are facing at present. Malawian audiences saw this film paralleling their own circumstances.

It is not only Ada that faces resistance from her husband's people owing to their cultural and religious differences. Earlier on, the plot also uncovers resistance that Hussein faced from Ada's people. Ada's sister objected to the relationship and killed Hussein in the end. Throughout the film, Ada's sister uses derogatory remarks to refer to Hussein's culture and region of origin. She is often heard referring to him as "a cattle herder from the north, a Moslem from the bushy region". Ada's uncle also objected to the relationship. He literally chased Hussein from their home when Ada presented him to her people as her future husband:

What? A future husband? Am I hearing you well? Don't we have good looking young boys among your own people here that you have to settle for this Moslem from the north? These people killed your father! You boy, get away from this home right now! I don't want to see you again.

The reaction of both Hussein's and Ada's relatives to their union signifies how the region of origin as an embodiment of culture affects the gender relations between male and females in African communities (see Cook & Crang, 1996). As the film portrays, Hussein's people could not support his choice of Ada because she is from the south and a Christian, both factors perceived as a betrayal to them. Consequently, Hussein, in reaction, started mistreating Ada and supported by his customs, the wife is regarded as inferior in the family.

In addition to cultural issues involving extended families and sentimental relationships, Nollywood films' portrayal of witchcraft and ancestry belief has a

special appeal to respondents' religious beliefs and experiences. In *Royal Fight*, Dubem, the youthful Queen, was childless. It was believed that she was cursed by her elders in the village at a young age supposedly because she was rude to them. Her situation affects the relationship between her and her husband, and she now seeks their intervention:

I recall, when I was a girl, I angered our gods and I angered you.
Today, I come before you to ask for your mercy as I present to you
these gifts from me as a gesture of reconciliation and I implore you
to forgive me and ask our gods on my behalf to forgive me too.

In discussing their observations in *Royal Fight*, participants acknowledged that the practice is still common in Malawi's traditional communities. Participants reacted differently to Dubem's action: some praised her for being an ideal African woman who is down to earth with her sense of belonging embodied in her portrayal of the recognition and respect of African cultural heritage. There were others who at the same time considered her belief in ancestral intervention outdated. Chapter seven will discuss the varying opinions over female representation on the films' representation among respondents.

However, the portrayal of Dubem suggests that women are at the receiving end of culture. In her case, it is only her who is being blamed for the childless situation in the family and nobody makes any effort to direct any blame at the husband. She is the only one making efforts to consult her elders while the husband is at home when it should have been a joint effort to find a solution to their problem. The scene, as much as it depicts the humble, humane and reconciliatory side of Dubem, does little

to reconstruct the gendered social stereotype that would bridge gaps in gender relations between men and women.

In conclusion, based on Malawian audiences' interpretation and understanding of cultural manifestations as portrayed in female characters in Nollywood, the section has demonstrated the extent to which Nigerian cultures are close to Malawian cultures. In line with the study's central theme, women have been at the centre of the discussion in which audiences agreed and disagreed on their perception of female representation in various scenes in the films. Characters like Dubem, the Queen Mother, Susan and Ada have been applauded as strong women who inspire female audiences and at the same time challenge female stereotypes.

However, as observed earlier in this chapter, women are at the centre of this cultural interrogation in Nollywood films. Some female characters are presented as heroines, articulating culture in the modern day, for example the Queen Mother. Other female characters are presented as victims, for example, Amarachi. But there are some females characters that are presented as both, for example, Dubem in *Royal Fight* is presented as a heroine in some scenes and in some she is presented or treated as a victim. On one hand, the film casts her childhood as troublesome. We see her fight with the prince, with local women in her village, and others in the royal household. There are examples of women presented as villains, for example, Ken's mother in *Mr & Mrs* was described as a bad and irresponsible woman for her apparent role in influencing her son to divorce his wife. In *Royal Fight*, as stated earlier, even when Dubem has settled as the queen in the royal household, some of the audiences faulted

her for consulting a magician to solve her childlessness. The critics were largely those with strong conservative religious convictions. At the same time, some discussants, especially from the rural communities, applauded her for not forgetting and forsaking her roots. They were impressed with Dubem's respect for the tradition. The same can be said of Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife*. The respondents were divided: some applauded her 'boldness' and others ridiculed her cultural and moral 'insensitivity'.

The response from audiences that took part in the study suggests that they were familiar with the cultural portrayals in most of the plots through the female characters discussed in this section. This is partly because Malawian cultural practices bear resemblance to those depicted in the movies by the characters. Further to this, the participants' exposure to the films might have had an influence to their perception or world view to some extent. Some of them confessed to have watched Nollywood films for almost two decades. Arguably, one could therefore assert that cultural hegemony was at play. In this case, Nollywood can be seen as a provider of role models, in the case of this study, unintentionally to change gender relations in Malawi and arguably in other recipients nations including Nigeria. This made it easy for the viewers to identify gender cultural codes being portrayed in the plots. As more female characters act as cultural agents in depicting narratives that counter gendered social female stereotypes, it paves a way for the Malawian female viewers to adopt such portrayals and challenge the social male dominance in their communities. There are some cultures in parts of Africa, including some parts of Nigeria where women are perceived fairly. In such cultural practices and beliefs,

women are not stereotyped based on their feminine gender. When these engendered communities are dramatised in the films, Malawian female viewers stand to benefit. With the large number of audiences across Africa, Nollywood is likely to influence audience's perception of women in African societies. I would argue that there is a possibility for engendered cultural hegemony that may reconstruct equal power relations between men and women across the continent's cultures. Thus, such continentalisation of African culture (s), in this case, gender and social relations between men and women, would form a distinct characteristic of the continent.

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has discussed the theme of identity in an attempt to understand audiences' response to portrayals in Nollywood films. Sub-section one discussed how the notion of *uBuntu* was crucial in audiences' interpretation and discussion of the portrayal of women in the films. Audiences generally agreed that *uBuntu* philosophy is the foundation of cultural identity across ethnic regions and cultures in Malawi. They indicated that the portrayal of *uBuntu* as dramatised in the films is similar to their own sense of it.

Sub-section two discussed the concept of cultural hegemony depicted in the films. Audiences discussed the similarities between the cultural manifestations portrayed in the films and their own cultural manifestations in real life situations. Such similarities between the audience and the film prompted the audiences to understand and critically analyse female representations in the films. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Nollywood has been argued as a provider of role models that influence

gender relations that benefit and respect both men and women. As these movies are watching across Africa, it is expected that the films are bringing in a new culture of gender relations that could be hegemonic across recipients nations in the continent. This could pave way for the female viewers in Malawi and elsewhere in Africa to adopt such portrayals and challenge the social male dominance in their respective communities or societies.

However, as the audiences that participated in the study were spread across Malawi, the issue of variances in interpretation of the portrayals was inevitable. The study suggests that culture, religion, education, ethnicity and location may have informed their reactions to the films. The next chapter therefore discusses the theme of subjectivity and how it is critical in the understanding of audiences' interpretation of the portrayal of women in the films.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 SUBJECTIVITY

SUBJECTIVITY IN AUDIENCES' REACTION TO FEMALE REPRESENTATION

Situating audiences within the discourses of African-ness and Gender Relations

INTRODUCTION

Respondents agreed in most of their analysis of the portrayals of women in Nollywood films. However, there were differences in their evaluation of the portrayals of women in some of the female characters. Such variances in the interpretation of women representation could be due to several factors. Age, sex, culture, religion, class and education are factors that informed their opinion regarding the portrayals in the films. Respondents contributed conflicting or opposing views on the notion of African-ness and gender. They debated on the notion of the ideal African women. They further debated on the notion of African gender and social relations. Thus, subjectivity is one of the key themes that emerged during audiences' discussion of the representation of females in Nollywood films.

The chapter is divided into two sections-: section one will discuss the notion of African-ness in relation to the concept of foreign-ness. The chapter, through extracts from the focus groups, demonstrates what is perceived as an ideal

African woman (or not) in the contexts of these audiences. Section two will discuss the notion of gender as portrayed in Nollywood films. Respondents' responses were informed by their perspective social, cultural, political, religious, educational, class and economic backgrounds.

SECTION ONE

‘AFRICAN-NESS’ VERSUS ‘FOREIGN-NESS’

There were a lot of reactions to Lupita Nyong'o's historic win at this year's (2014) Academy Awards-pride, elation, hope, and, for many Americans, a resounding sense of relief. A black woman had won this prestigious, coveted award. Two minutes later after Lupita had left the stage with the powerful affirmation that all our dreams are valid, my aunt called to say: "The girl is so articulate! Thank God she is one of us. You know, not one of them." I instantly recognised the distinction my aunt was making- a distinction and a separation that I myself have struggled to reconcile with for years. Because by "one of us", she meant that Lupita wasn't like these other black people, African-Americans. (Blay, 2013)

This excerpt taken from the media as blogged by Blay (2013) in www.xojane.co.uk cited came against the background of the 2013 Academy Awards. The author gave an account of a young Kenyan lady who won the award in what the writer describes as 'against all odds'. The central message the writer wants to bring to the attention of the reader is that it is the colour of the skin of the woman and her African identity. The writer opens the debate whether being black constitutes African-ness or being black and having African heritage constitutes African-ness. The author's concern appears to put forth the question about what constitutes a 'real African'.

The quote suggests that not all blacks are Africans. The above extract establishes the context of this discussion and links well to the distinction of African-ness in a woman. It leads to the conclusion that to be African by virtue of one's ethnic origin does not automatically make one an ideal African. In this study, the question of African-ness emerged as one of the concepts during the focus group discussions of

Nollywood films. Respondents presented their respective views or definitions of what being an African woman entails. Their views were subject to their cultural, class, social, educational, religious and ethnic orientations. To an extent, respondents defined African-ness in relation to what they perceived as non-African-ness or non-Malawian-ness. In other words, African-ness was defined in terms of its opposite, foreign-ness. Individuals within and across the focus groups had varied reactions to the films' portrayal of the concept of an ideal African woman.

During the focus group discussions, participants debated what constitutes the ideal African woman, as opposed to a foreign woman, conceptually as well as in reality. There were debates across age groups, communities and ethnic divide. The reaction to the films' portrayal suggests subjectivity in participants' understanding and interpretation of the concept of African-ness as well as 'foreign-ness'. Hence, the question of African-ness in a woman was perceived as subjective.

Just like identity, the concept of 'African-ness' and 'foreign-ness' is a construct across age, community, social and cultural backgrounds. Respondents indicated that some of the films' portrayals of women were a reflection of a 'typical' African woman. The following excerpt from one of the respondents from the northern region of Malawi attests to this viewpoint with reference to the portrayal in *Not With My Daughter*:

12. Look at those women, look at their faces, their colour, their smiles, the songs they sing, the dances they dance, everything like us Malawians. But they are Nigerian women. They go to the well to fetch water, go to the gardens, sell vegetables along the streets, and fetch firewood in the bush with a baby on their back. Just like

us here. This is just film...but it feels real (36 year old female social worker. (Female respondent from Mzimba Boma, 2013)

Extract (12) gives a description of what the respondent defines as a real African woman. The closer the image on the screen is to the respondent's real life, the more she associates herself with the film. The following words highlight elements that the respondent in (12) points out as reference to her claim of likening the image on the screen to her own image:

Look at their face, their colour

....the song, the dance

....fetch firewood in the bush

....with a baby at the back

The first lines extracted from the quote above are significant in explaining the respondent's definition of African-ness. To begin with, the viewer is convinced the female characters portrayed in the films are their own reflection. The characters represent a typical African woman based on the respondent's worldview. The characters' physical outlook is self-explanatory: faces, blackness and they are women like the female audiences. The viewer further related other social attributes of ideal African woman to the attributes that are associated with being an African woman: domestic chores, participating in traditional dances and motherly duties such as carrying a baby on their back wherever they go.

The reaction found in (12) above is shared by another respondent from the southern region of the country. She uses *Mr & Mrs* and *Royal Fight* as cases in point:

13. We see that in the film *Mr & Mrs*, Susan is always busy taking care of her home: preparing the food for her family. Cooking is what characterises us Malawian women, and our friends in Nigeria give us the similar impression through their films. In *Royal Fight*, we see the Queen always in her traditional African dress. I never see her in a pair of trousers or in fancy clothes. Her daughter in-law who later assumed the rank of being a Queen follows suit. That is what we do here in Malawi. Our tradition does not encourage women to compete with men wearing trousers or walking out and about everywhere as men do. (32 year old housewife from Chikwawa, 2013)

The above extracts (12) and (13) are responses from two female respondents from Mzimba and Chikwawa, both from a rural background. Both respondents based their reaction on their daily experiences which form their worldview, and in return this impacts on their perception of an African woman. In traditional Malawian society, as is common across rural communities in Africa, a woman's world is defined as being confined to the role of a mother or a daughter in the home. The woman is expected to do household chores such as cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water and gardening. For traditional societies, it can be argued that this is in no way a demeaning stereotype but rather an ideal role. Anything short of this is considered unacceptable. An ideal woman is expected to live up to such expectations as a home maker and a full-time mother in addition to being a loyal wife to her husband.

Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (1997) discuss the roles of women among the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups respectively in Nigeria. The two scholars argue that in African societies, fulfilling one's role as a mother or wife in the home or community does not translate to blind loyalty as perceived by Western critics but rather it is the role appropriated to them as complementary to men's role in a family

or society. This view is shared by some female respondents across the focus groups. The above assertion in Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (1997) supports the position expressed by female participants from the Mzimba Focus Group. Many female participants applauded Susan as an ideal African woman owing to her preoccupation with domestic chores in and around her home. They described it as normal and not an act of female subjugation, arguing, this is a general understanding whenever one enters into a marriage pact.

However, this gender role of an African woman was not accepted without challenge among participants. There were contestations across the focus groups. Some respondents indicated that the films' portrayal of women was not consistent with the reality of an ideal Malawian woman. They contended that a Malawian woman is expected to be submissive and loyal. Basing their reaction on the case study films *The Last Vote*, *Not with My Daughter*, *Royal Fight* and *The Pastor's wife*, respondents from the patrilineal community of Chikwawa said women in these films are portrayed as possessing characteristics lacking in their Malawian counterparts. One male respondent expressed his point of view with reference to *Not With My Daughter* in 2013:

14. If only our women could be as strong as Ada in the film *Not With My Daughter*, we men could think twice before abusing them. She speaks up her mind and fights her way out. Look when Hussein divorced her using Islamic Law, she defended herself by challenging him before his family insisting the family was registered under civil laws. She even demanded that her daughter be withdrawn from Koran class and instead be sent to public schools where she would be introduced to a curriculum for a

secular education. (A 32 year old sugar cane grower, Chikwawa, 2013).

The extract above (14) gives an overall picture of what this participant made of women's representation in Nollywood films in relation to the question of the ideal African woman. The extract gives the impression that there are some differences between Nollywood's portrayal of women and the reality of how women live in Malawi. This suggests that although there are common similarities between women as portrayed in the film and their Malawian counterparts (audiences), there are some specific elements that distinguish Malawian women from those depicted in Nollywood movies. As the case of Adanma, militancy marks a major distinction and hence, the Malawian counterparts could benefit from such acts.

However, while agreeing that Malawian women would benefit from the films by emulating some of the roles played by female characters, some respondents were critical of some of the roles. Respondents affirmed Ukata's (2010) observation that the portrayal of some characters had the potential to have a negative influence on female audiences. Obsession and apparent devotion to witchcraft, occultism, *juju* and fetishism were some of those elements that such respondents cited as potentially elements of bad influence:

15. We do have witchcraft here as well. It is done in secret. We hear reports of women going for love potions or outdoing each other magically because of a man. But they do not do so openly. Our women counterparts in Nigeria seem to do it openly as a common practice. The magnitude is too sickening. It is not the Malawian way of doing things. Their films tell us it is the Nigerian way. (49 year old male teacher respondent from Ntcheu, 2013)

The above extract (15) suggests that on one hand, the concept of ‘African woman’ has common attributes across most societies or communities across Africa. On the other hand, there are differences with respect to specific communities and societies. There are elements that are commonly identified as typical African. Likewise, there are attributes that are exclusively ascribed as typical Malawian and a nation has some degree of distinct gender code that makes it unique from the rest.

The question of subjectivity was central in viewers’ discourse of African-ness as opposed to foreign-ness. It was contentious for the respondents in and across the focus groups to agree on the common concept of a real African woman. However, it is inevitable that the effect of globalisation coupled with globalised media is exposing Malawian and African audiences to alien cultures. Arguably, this has the ability to dilute the core identity of traditional African culture. Hence, both Nigerian and Malawian culture are subject to influences from non-African culture. It can be debated that the above scenario is likely to make it difficult to define what constitutes a pure Malawian or African cultures. This would concur with the assertion in Preece (2009) who states that culture is fluid, negotiable and moves with time.

However, most respondents agreed on what elements constitute African cultural identities. In other words, respondents had a clear concept, drawing a line between the ideal African woman and non-African Western or foreign woman. Some respondents indicated that some films portrayed elements that they described as non-African. They contended that some Nollywood films appear to promote elements of

Western culture blindly, and others do so knowingly. They argued that some scenes in some of these films, just like many other Nollywood films, do not reflect the image of the African woman. They substantiated their claim with reference to the films *The Pastor's Wife* and *Mr. & Mrs.*:

16. The way that Sister Shade behaves is not African at all. We Malawian women do not behave like that. I do not think Nigerian women behave like that either. It is too much for a wife let alone the pastor's wife. Drinking in public, wearing revealing clothes and indulging in extra-marital affairs. The same can be said of the friend of Susan in *Mr & Mrs*. She spends most of her energy and time on her work, in the process neglecting her duties as a wife. Her career and success at work is all she cares about. Now the husband is tired and starts sleeping with a housemaid. She ought to balance family and work. Both matter a lot and if it were me the family comes first. (54 year old retired female community worker from Mzimba Boma Focus Group, 2013)

The above extract (16) demonstrates respondents' perspective of an ideal African woman. It is subjective and based on one's social construct. For this particular respondent, and indeed, for other respondents, to be an African woman implies being reserved, loyal and a homemaker. It also implies playing a subordinate role to the husband and the in-laws.

Based on the portrayal of Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife*, it is evident that the character does not meet the criteria of an ideal wife or woman in the eyes of the participants. This is also reflected in the narrative of the film. Fellow women at the church where Sister Shade's husband is a pastor seem not to appreciate her conduct in and outside church. She drinks in street bars, dresses inappropriately and sleeps with some married men who also happen to be members of her husband's

congregation. While the act of wearing trousers is subject to the context, drinking in public and extra-marital affairs with other men make the case too weak for Sister Shade to be presented as an ideal African woman. Sister Shade pays for her care-free attitude, she is isolated at the church by fellow women members. Every time she makes an attempt to get involved in church activities, she is openly ridiculed.

The reaction of the respondents, just as that of the community in which Sister Shade lives, is not surprising. This is due to the fact that the respondents' social construct is based on their expectation of the role of a wife in the home as observed in Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (1997) who argue that gender roles are subject to the context of cultural players. Respondents' reaction to Sister Shade's representation confirms Ntibagirirwa's (2009) observation and critique of present-day African societies. Ntibagirirwa describes current African society as experiencing a moral crisis as a result of an identity crisis. He argues that this is due to the fact that "Africans have shifted away from their own value system and the moral values that go with it, to other value systems underpinned by other metaphysical foundations" (65). He accuses scholars and political leaders of the post-independence era of betraying the African value system by analysing it using socio-economic and political criteria that are drawn from a different value system, namely Marxism.

However some female respondents across the focus groups shared a contrary view to that of Ntibagirirwa:

17. As far as we are concerned, God never prescribed to us what or what not to wear as a female. In the same way God never prescribed to us what we can do and not do as women. Sister Shade is doing a good job sensitising fellow women to realise their rights and claim them. For a long time, church leadership has been men's show. Women are used in supporting roles. She even tells them that they too can become church ministers too. Isn't this inspiring enough? (21 year old college student- Female respondent from Lilongwe Focus Group, 2013)

A male respondent in the extract (18) below shared similar views in support of the female respondent above (17). He describes those expressing reservation over Sister Shade's dress manner as hypocrites.

18. I have no issue with my wife or daughters dressing how they wish. In pubs and at workplaces we meet such dress styles and we get on with that...don't we? I do not understand why it should be a problem seeing our wives at home in the same way. Let us face up to it please. (40 year old male Police Officer from Kanengo Focus Group, 2013)

The above extracts (17) and (18) articulate the views from other respondents, who, as opposed to the earlier views offered, see nothing non-African in Sister Shade's portrayal in the film *The Pastor's Wife*. From the extracts, one gets the impression that according to the respondents, Sister Shade is simply relaying a message: gone are the days when women were to be seen as second class citizens. It can be argued that as a pastor's wife, Sister Shade makes a religious statement that God is not there to oppress women or to allow the structural oppression of women at the hands of men. She further stated that God is not interested in dress code and urges fellow women to consider challenging the church's senior leadership roles; "It's not men's show only". At home Sister Shade demonstrates that she is equal to her husband.

Probably to her credit, she now wants to involve fellow women at the church to follow suit in their homes and in the local Christian community. In this way, it may be suggested that Sister Shade emancipates fellow women and adopts Western approach in directly rallying women to be militant against male dominance. This confirms the observation in Bakare-Yusuf (2004) who asserts that the question of African woman or African culture is contentious. Bakare-Yusuf opines that traditional African societies cannot do away with Western influences in their everyday life. He calls for change, asking cultural players to be open to change. Therefore, it may be argued that this makes the debate on African-ness in a woman subjective as it is socially construed according to time and location.

Such a view is nevertheless subject to challenge by traditionalists or culturists. Some participants opined that some portrayals such as that of Sister Shade are superficial of any African woman let alone an ideal African woman. They argued:

19. I have no problem with women spending much of their time building their careers like a friend Susan's friend, Linda does in Mr & Mrs. But wearing revealing clothes as in the case of Sister Shade in The Pastor's Wife is unacceptable and uncharacteristic of Malawian standards. Unfortunately it is degenerating into a new fashion among the young women today but this is not Europe. This is not America. We are in Africa. We cannot copy some of these things here blindly like that. Our women have to be mindful of this. (Male respondent from Kanengo Focus Group, 2013)

In conclusion, the question of African-ness is subjective. As discussed in the previous chapter on identity, the concept of African-ness is a social construct (see Torres et. al., 1999). In the same way as other sociological phenomena, African-ness is built around social beliefs that last for generations. Hence, as identity is fluid it is

subject to change with the times which effectively brings in different interpretation by various people or communities as players or spectators. Preece (2009) defines identity as a negotiated, relational, contextual, emergent and fluid phenomenon that is ideologically informed. It is with this understanding that the concept falls within the theoretical framework of subjectivity.

It can therefore be argued that the idea of African-ness is flexible and subject to reconstruction by the people who share certain values or are perceived as holding the continent's cultural values in high esteem. Nonetheless, it remains a contested notion. For instance, on the question of whether Sister Shade's behaviour is inappropriate or not, most respondents, especially the elderly and those from the rural communities, were critical of her. It goes without saying that their exposure to other worldviews is very limited, making it difficult for them to appreciate the changes of paradigm in gender and social changes of the time. Likewise, those who supported her were predominantly the younger generation and urban or semi-urban residents with a reasonable educational background. With the latter group's exposure to other worldviews, it is of little surprise that their reaction to Sister Shade's lifestyle was hugely accommodating, as the case was with a 21 year old female respondent from Lilongwe Focus Group who at the time of the study was attending college education (see extract 17).

Therefore, the social constructs affecting the respective participants inevitably influenced the way they read the films, thereby affecting their responses to the question of African-ness in women in the films. This brought in variation in

audiences' reaction to the portrayal of women in Nollywood films. Respondents within the group and across the groups contributed differing opinions regarding the portrayal of women in the films. This section has earlier attributed such scenarios to the differences in their social and cultural context, among several factors.

However, it suffices to note that there are standards that are acceptable and unacceptable within the African women/gender framework that are functional in Malawian societies regardless of the context. The response to *Sister Shade* serves as an example. This leads to the suggestion that despite differences in their criteria of African-ness in a woman, there is a continental criterion that cuts across the cultures of African societies that distinguishes them from overseas or non-African women. I would argue that this is continentalisation, in which African women share a continental identity that reflects the Pan-Africanist spirit of African-ness, and gender relations are central in any attempt to define and identify a common African discourse that would form a component of continentalisation. Hence, after investigating the films as potential vehicles to articulate Pan-Africanist philosophy by exploring the African-ness in these films, the next section discusses the concept of gender relations in the films. The section explores, through respondents' reaction, how the films portray gender relations in various ways. At the end of the section, there is an attempt to situate the continental notion of African gender relations in response to Pan-Africanism and continentalisation theories.

SECTION TWO

GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS

The issue of female representation cannot be discussed in isolation from gender issues. Gender is a social construct and varies from community to community but with consistencies. It is measured in the way male and female members of the community relate to each other. Every society or community has socially constructed roles specifically for males and females. These roles are based on biology (Giddens et al., 2000). Participants gave different responses to how they interpret Nollywood film's portrayal of gender relations. Their responses reflect their individual and/ or communal interpretations of power relations among the respondents.

Female respondents from the Mangochi Focus Group believed the character Ada, from the film *Not With My Daughter*, is exemplary in fighting for the cause of women in patriarchal communities. She is strong and resists being oppressed by her husband and in-laws. They argued that her actions demonstrate how women are able to take the initiative in bridging the gap that leaves power imbalances in their families at the expense of female members:

20. Ada addresses her husband as her equal by simply calling him Hussein which is strange to the man's extended family. The local girl who was taken as a second wife calls Hussein master and treats him as a king. Ada confronts Hussein to explain himself to her for his actions like when she suspects that Hussein is having an extra-marital relationship with Adijat. Ada confronts even her mother-in-law over her child. The mother-in-law forced Ada's daughter to go to the local Islamic school while Ada had wished the child to go to a secular school. Ada is a no-nonsense woman and those around

her in Hussein's family know that she is not a pushover. Good show by Ada but it does not inspire me as something that reflects of an African woman. We simply do not go to such extremes here. (A 27 year old female Community Health worker from Mangochi Focus Group, 2013)

This extract above (20) suggests that Adanma is a liberal and independent woman unlike many of her generation. She is also seen to be a bold woman in resisting several attempts of bullying from her in-laws in an extended family household set-up. This is how she reduces the power gap between her and her husband, Hussein. Unlike Ada, Hussein's second wife, Adijat is submissive. She is at the mercy of Hussein and her in-laws and is an example of female subjugation in a patriarchal society. It is common knowledge that the portrayal of Adijat plays a big role in widening the gap in power relations between men and women in homes and in communities as a whole.

However, Ada's action, though an example of how to address patriarchal dominance in society, is not considered a model example. The respondent reacted "good action.....but it does not inspire me as something that reflects an average African woman. We simply do not go to such extremes". By extreme, the respondent suggests that Ada's actions were completely unacceptable in an African context. For instance, physically and verbally fighting her mother-in-law physically is very uncharacteristic of African traditions regardless of which community or social status one belongs to.

The opinion that the films have the potential to bridge the gap in power relations between men and women was shared by a female respondent from the Mabulabo

Focus Group. Citing the Queen Mother, the respondents observed that key female characters in the *Royal Fight* demonstrate how the film can potentially deconstruct social male dominance at all levels of their interactions:

21. The Queen Mother is in control and is a symbol of calmness in the royal household. She is cool-headed and takes no sides and this wins her the support and respect of everyone in the household. (61 year old farmer- female respondent from Mabulabo Community Focus Group, 2013)

In the above extract (21), the respondent cites two females in *Royal Fight* who construct and reconstruct the image of women in society. In the absence of the sick king, the Queen Mother demonstrates skilful leadership roles in the royal household and the kingdom at large. She intervenes in conflicts among younger members of the royal household. The princess-turned-queen follows in the foot-steps of her mother-in-law. She is a strong woman who survives abuse and rejection by some members of the royal household. She shows love to all and offers advice to other royal family members. She also helps her husband mature. Her husband turns into a wise and a calm ruler.

In discussing the film *Mr and Mrs* a respondent from the Nkhatabay Focus Group indicated that Susan and her friend gave a good account of how women could develop autonomy in their life. They said the way Susan acts in managing herself as an independent woman sends a strong signal to men who abuse women's love and take them for granted.

22. She acts as if she is seeing a new man...making calls as if she was talking to a real boyfriend, going out for a date with the

supposed new man in her life. Ken felt jealous of all these developments. In the end it was revealed that she was just making up all those movements. It paid dividends as Ken now realises how useful Susan is to him. It is now Ken asking Susan to take him back and the woman is now in control of deciding the situation. She now has the balance of power and as a matter of fact she has a bigger negotiating power than Ken. (30 year old male Secondary/High School teacher from Nkhatabay Focus Group, 2013)

The above extract (22) demonstrates how a respondent concluded that the character Susan portrays how power relations between men and women can be managed in a relationship. Susan uses different ways to achieve this. She is independent, adventurous, and calculative. She gives her husband the impression that she is dating a new man. The husband becomes jealous and takes a step forward towards reconciliation. Ken realises that Susan is equally important and starts to regard her with respect. Susan's action in the eyes of the Malawian audiences probably challenges the pre-existing patriarchal beliefs and practices in most Malawian communities that manipulate women at will.

However, respondents from the Lilongwe Community Focus Group said the opening scenes of the film appear to reinforce the pre-existing female stereotypes in Malawian societies. These stereotypes confine women to domestic chores and as objects of man's sexual satisfaction as discussed in chapter five of the thesis. They argued that Susan is depicted as a miserable woman who is voiceless while Ken is presented as domineering and manipulative. One could contest that it is a reflection of the real life situation facing many women in Malawi as this respondent asserts:

23. She looks unhappy and spends all the time cooking. The husband never appreciated her and all that she was trying to do to please him. He undermines her and thinks he is better off without her. The gap in power relations is too wide in the first section and it is worrying. This is not uncommon in our society even in these days. (21 year old female job seeker from Lilongwe Focus Group, 2013)

Respondents from the Mzimba Boma Focus Group differed from their counterparts in Lilongwe as the above extract (23) suggests. They argued that, for them, Susan's portrayal in the first scenes of the film exemplifies what an ideal woman ought to be. They believed Susan was simply fulfilling her role as Ken's wife:

24. When one enters into a family as a wife you know what you have to do and Susan knew her duties and responsibilities well. We cook for our husbands and do the laundry for them and even prepare bathing water for them. This does not imply we are slaves or servants to them but we are simply fulfilling our roles as expected. They too have their own roles to fulfil in the family which we expect them to perform as husbands. (26 year old housewife from Mzimba Focus Group, 2013)

It came as no surprise that respondents in the same focus group criticised Susan's friend for promoting her career interests at the expense of her family. They accused her of negligence since she was leaving household chores in the hands of the housemaid, a move, they contended, proved costly to her.

25. Is that gender equality? I say no. You can't spend all the time at home and not even do the washing for your husband. A house girl can't do everything for you as a wife. Instead of talking about balancing power relations then it becomes power imbalance and the man is being a victim here. The fact that he is not employed should not make him less important at all. No wonder the house girl takes all the responsibilities even sleeping with the man. (43 year old male church clerk from Mzimba Focus Group, 2013)

However, one female respondent from Lunzu Focus Group indicated that she found the behaviour of Susan's friend acceptable. She argued that being a woman and a wife should not subject one to the confinement of the home, doing household chores all the time.

26. What difference does it make? If a man comes here very late every day that doesn't look an issue just because he is a man. Whenever the woman gets a job that keeps her out for long hours then it is an exception. That is not fair at all. (40 year old male primary school teacher from Lunzu Focus Group, 2013)

Some respondents from the Lilongwe Focus Group indicated that the film *The Pastor's Wife* is relevant to the transformation of power relations between men and women. They said that Sister Shade crosses social-cultural boundaries but fights against male domination.

27. At home she enjoys equal rights to her husband. The husband never complains about her autonomous lifestyle. Then why should people outside the house make an issue out of it? She is even taking the initiative to wake up fellow women at the local church. She is telling them to be free and compete with me in the church's leadership position. Unfortunately, they don't see it this way and they do not appreciate her efforts. (19 year old female respondent working as women's rights activist from Lunzu Focus Group, 2013)

However, some respondents within this group differed from their fellow members. They asserted that Sister Shade's character is exaggerated and unrealistic. They believed that instead Sister Shade is an enigma to her peers at the church and a rogue to her 'saintly' pastor husband:

28. How can adultery and arrogance towards one's husband and the members of the church community be translated to an act of

balancing power relations? In fact, it appears she is abusing power. In our view, the balance of power should be a two-way affair and should be done with respect. She chooses to boss over fellow women at the church, they didn't like it. She chooses to dictate to the pastor what and how he has to handle his work, what a pity! She chooses to go drinking in public on the streets, she shocks everyone. And the worst of all is for her to manipulate the junior pastor and seduce him into committing adultery in the church building. The whole act is unacceptable. (24 year old video show male operator from Lunzu Focus Group, 2013)

In extract (23), the respondent from the Lilongwe Focus Group is critical of how the film portrayed Susan: passive, mute and domitable. She and most of her fellow participants expressed dissatisfaction at how the character Susan fails to demonstrate the urgency to inspire women audiences in the first scenes of the plot. She is being shown as a loyal and committed housewife to Ken. This reaction could be seen as a result of the respondent's background. The respondent is relatively young, at 21, and an urban resident with a fair educational background. In contrast, respondents (24) and (25), from the Mzimba Focus Group, come from a rural background, most of whom have little or no education at all.

In extract (27), the respondent's age and educational background may have played a part in her perception of gender relations in present society. Respondent (25), however, endorses the traditional notion of a submissive African wife. This participant's response is arguably a result of her social and cultural upbringing. She was born and raised in Mzimba district a predominantly patriarchal society. The district has a long reputation for having highly patriarchal cultural practices.

In extract (25), the male respondent reacted in a similar manner to the respondent in extract (24). He too appeared to endorse the portrayal of Susan as a submissive housewife to Ken. The respondent is relatively young, 43, and unlike respondent (24), is fairly educated. One would expect him to appreciate contemporary discourse on gender relations. He reacts to the contrary. His rigid attitude could be attributed to his religious convictions. He is a practising Christian and holds a prominent leadership position in the local church. The Bible or Christianity does little to address the disparity in gender relations. Biblical texts predominantly show women as second class citizens. For instance, the Bible gives an account of Jesus feeding five thousand hungry people during a crusade but specifically states that excluding women and children (see Mathew 14:13-21; John 6:1-15; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17). This disregards women as equal and capable human beings as their male counterparts. As a matter of fact, the Bible calls for women to be submissive and obey their husbands as one of its social and moral teachings (see Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1; Ephesians 5:22 and Esther 1:20). As a church elder, respondent 34 would not want to be seen to support a practice contrary to Christianity.

The above attitude is in contrast to attitudes expressed by respondents in extracts (26) and (27). In extract (26), the respondent, although male, questions the wisdom of those that are critical of Susan's career obsessed friend. His accommodating reaction can possibly be attributed to his educational background and occupation as a primary school teacher in Malawi and reasonably educated. Probably, this places him in a position where he is more critical than his fellow respondent in extract (26) who only attained basic education. Possession of reasonable or better education has

several implications in the holder's social relations and lifestyle. It suggests that the holder is more exposed to other worldviews and is critical to conventional beliefs and wisdom. Consequently, when it comes to gendered and social relations, the educated viewers are likely to base their criticism or analysis with a consideration of a wider picture that could sometimes go beyond the conventional codes of their communities. The above explanation may help us to appreciate how the respondent (26) is flexible in his approach to issues of gender relations as opposed to many of his peers in his community.

In addition to his educational background, the respondent is a young, 40 year old urbanite. Other than age and education, it could be suggested that the respondent's area of residence culturally accommodates women more than the area where respondents (26) and (27) are from. Lunzu, is situated in the southern region of Malawi and, contrary to Mzimba, it is a predominantly matrilineal community in terms of existing cultural practices. Male members of society in matrilineal cultural communities are believed to be more accommodating to women's rights than their patrilineal counterparts (Mandala, 1984). As for the respondent in extract (27), her reaction might have largely been influenced by her role as an activist in women's rights issues. However, this does not imply that other factors should be ignored. She is 19 years old, thus, young enough to view any notions of submissiveness in women as outdated. Furthermore, she is also a semi-urbanite or urbanite with exposure to contemporary discourses on women and gender relations in modern Malawi. Lastly, she comes from a predominantly matrilineal community, where, she was born and bred.

However, it is problematic to identify the sources of influence in the reaction of the respondent in extract (28). At 24, he is relatively young to be accommodating. He is also an urbanite and was raised in a predominantly matrilineal cultural community which would suggest that he would hold a liberal approach to issues of gender relations. However, he does not have any education. He has worked as a video parlour operator since he was 17. He indicated to me that he never went to school and he left his village for the city to look for domestic jobs at the age of 12. It may be fair to conclude that his lack of education coupled with his rural upbringing at least would have influenced his attitudes towards gender and social relations.

In conclusion, the discussion on gender roles and power relations in Nollywood films was contentious among and across participants in all the focus groups. As I indicated earlier, their reactions were subjective. Just as in the discussion of identity, the question of gender is a construct (see Omoniyi and White, 2006; Torres, et. al., 1999). In discussing the films, participants based their analysis on the existing local discourses on gender in their respective communities (see extracts 20-28). Based on the discussions above, I argue that responses were sociologically influenced by the participants' age, religion, culture, ethnicity, occupation and education.

Respondents from matrilineal communities were more receptive to seemingly changes in gender roles than those from patrilineal communities. Chapter one has discussed the implication of matrilineal and patrilineal communities to gender and social relations in Malawian society. Gender relations in matrilineal communities are negotiable, and evolving. Hence, women in matrilineal communities do perform

roles that are seen as the privilege of men in patrilineal communities. The above observation confirms Amadiume's (1987) assertion that to be a man does not necessarily require one to be a male. In the same way, to be a woman does not necessarily translate into a female. She argues that in her Igbo society it is the roles that defines one's gender and not vice versa.

Based on the discussion in this chapter, it is evident that respondents had varying interpretations and explanation of the respondents' concept of gender. This reflects the diversity of cultures that is a product of sociological factors as discussed earlier in this chapter. Similarly, in elsewhere in African societies, the issue of cultural diversity is likely to affect the way they interpret and conceive female portrayals in Nollywood. Africa is a multi-ethnic continent and each ethnic group has its own beliefs and practices which differ from others within or across the nation-states. Education and age also play a critical role in the formation of sub-cultures that influences people's perceptions and attitudes. In the process, there approach to films' female portrayals as the case is with Nollywood could be affected by the said sub-cultures. However, there are some homogeneous elements of gender notions that cut across African cultural communities.

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has looked at subjectivity as one of the central themes in discussing the representation of women in Nollywood films based on local audiences' responses in Malawi. In relation to subjectivity, the chapter above all discussed the concept of African-ness in a woman which is a social construct, in the same way as the concept

of foreign-ness alongside it. Respondents held contested opinions over this concept. Just like the concept of gender, the notions of African-ness and foreign-ness are social constructs. Thus, they are constructed by factors such as education, age, religion, geographical location, culture and other socialisation or sociological processes.

Secondly, the chapter discussed the issue of gender and power relations dynamics as represented in the films. Gender, just like the notion of identity in chapter five is rigid in some individuals or communities, while, at the same time, it can be flexible in others. There are sociological factors that contribute to such variation. Such factors include but are not limited to education, marriage and inheritance cultural customs, religion, age and location.

For this notion to make sense within a localised context, the study suggests that viewers would need to appropriate them to their local situations. The next chapter therefore discusses how audiences appropriate cultural portrayals in films. The discussion helps Malawian audiences to possibly make sense of these portrayals in relation to their relevance to their respective concept of gender.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0 APPROPRIATION

AUDIENCE'S IMAGED/PERCEIVED APPROPRIATION OF THE FILMS' PORTRAYALS

INTRODUCTION

Appropriation can be defined as the acculturation of cultural symbols, artefacts, genres and rituals (Fanon, 2008). Acculturation leads to the formation of a localised version of the adopted and adapted cultural elements. For instance, the *Kwasakwasa* dance, believed to be originally from Zaire, has been adopted by other African countries and adapted to the style that makes it easy for them to perform. Thus, conceptually, cultural appropriation is exchange, dominance, exploitation and transculturation. As a theory, appropriation cannot be clearly articulated in the absence of the concept of culture. Hence, appropriation as a theme for this chapter is conceived within the context of cultural representation. There are various ways of defining culture. It implies the language, customs, basic values, religion, core beliefs and activities that characterise a particular group of people (Hall, 1997). As a loose definition, culture is a way of living. Young (2009) attests that an analysis of the concept of a given culture is, in effect, an attempt to give an identity to the people who share its culture. Thus, he argues that “the concept of cultural appropriation has no application unless insiders and outsiders, members and non-members of a culture, can be distinguished” (2005:136). As discussed earlier in chapter three, there are

different facets of cultural appropriation in relation to film. For the purpose of this study, we are discussing two of these facets. The first is the appropriation by the film makers: directors, producers and actors. These players may appropriate a film to serve various interests: political, religious commercial, entertainment and social, just to mention a few (see Schneider, 2003; Young, 2009). Secondly, it is the appropriation made by the audiences or viewers. The consumers of the film, after a long period of exposure to the culture, begin to emulate cultural practices on display. In the long term, their viewing experiences negotiate and renegotiate with their real life experiences and arguably, a hybrid culture emerges (see Canclini, 1995). This suggests that the new culture is never the original version of what they were exposed to and whatever they do now is neither a representation of their own culture nor the wholesale adoption of the new culture. This study is applying the latter definition.

The chapter explores how Malawian film audiences involved in this study, re-live or utilise cultural portrayals in Nollywood films to construct their perception of women among them. The study reveals that some of the cultural contact with Nollywood films gave the audiences a new mind set, attitude and perception towards female members of their respective communities. During the focus group discussions, three sub-themes emerged. I employed grounded theory both for data collection and as my analytical tool. Corbin and Strauss (1997) point out the effectiveness of using data generated theory in research, which, they argue helps the investigator to tease out the best from the participants.

The discussion is organised into two sub-themes in relation to the main theme of appropriation. The first sub-theme discusses how the films impact on the viewers' social and cultural life and how this is related to their perception and attitude towards female members of their communities. The second sub-theme discusses how audiences, in particular women, view the films as 'role models' and how that in turn impacts on their lives. It further shows how male audiences fit in this picture and how some male characters act as role models to male viewers and how this impacts on their relationship with women.

SECTION ONE

EDUCATION

29. Nigerian films are like a teacher. They teach us so many things in life. By watching them we learn how to perfect our sentimental relationships. We learn how to respect each other. We also learn how to be generous with others in need. We learn how to handle difficult situations like poverty.....these films to me are a teacher. They equip me with survival skills. (41 year old male respondent from Lunzu Focus Group, 2013)

The above extract is one of many responses that participants gave in their reaction to Nollywood films. For this respondent, like other audiences in Malawi, film is taking the place of folklore in traditional society. In traditional Malawian society, folklore is used as a forum through which people, especially the young, gain wisdom or knowledge passed on to them from the elderly members of society (Chimombo, 1987; Kerr, 1991). Every story told has a moral agenda (ibid). Hence, there is always the common expectation that younger audiences react to the moral message in the story and this challenges them to adopt a good lifestyle that would lead to become productive and responsible citizens. Ben-Amos (1971) describes folklore as socially contextual. He states that it is meant to serve a particular group of people or nation. He contends that folklore revolves around a target society or community and, most folklore is characteristically possessive, representative and creative or re-creative in nature. He echoes Chimombo's (1987) and Kerr's (1991) observation regarding the role of folklore in society: "It is the learning of the people...wisdom of the people, the people's knowledge, or more fully, the lore, erudition, knowledge or teaching of a folk" (Ben-Amos, 1971: 6). Thus the emergence of Nollywood in

Malawi suggests that the film is assuming the role of folklore in modern Malawian communities especially in the urban areas where folk-telling is no longer a common practice.

Informal education is one of the roles fulfilled by folktale and Nollywood is being credited with bearing a similar role according to some respondents. A 30 year old female participant from Mangochi testifies:

30. They teach me strategies to please my husband. Through the films I now know what to do when my husband is moody to cheer him up. I have learned to hug him immediately he arrives home from work. I have learned to dress for different occasions: when out with my husband or when at home. All I do is to live with time and with the contemporary test so as he doesn't have to admire others outside, you know temptations are temptations and if others out there whether at work or in social circles are better than you...the man might have other ideas...you never know...for now whenever I am around he can't keep his eyes off me. (A 34 year old female respondent from Mangochi Focus Group, 2013)

The respondent above highlights the extent to which Nollywood films contribute to social aspects of Malawian women. Malawi is a predominantly conservative society. According to most respondents, most women are reserved. They do not openly express their affection for their loved ones. There have been reports that this creates problems in family relationships. Some men resort to staying away from their homes, choosing instead to be in the company of friends in bars or at other social gatherings. Consequently, this causes a rift between men and their spouses as they have little time to communicate with each other. With the advent of Nollywood, the respondent in extract (31) suggests that as long as women change, the gap in

communication is likely to be reduced as men will find their homes more appealing.

This female respondent from Mangochi made the following confession:

31. My husband is proving to be the closest friend I ever have. I am just discovering this of late. These Nigerian movies have been so helpful to me. (A 24 year old housewife from Mangochi, 2013)

Plots in *The Royal Fight* and *The Comforter* appear to perform the above stated function. In *The Royal Fight*, the behaviour of the leading female character, Dubem, is exemplary. She treats her husband, Ikenna, with affection despite the man's temperament. This works out well in the end as their relationship grows stronger. The same applies in *The Comforter* where the leading female character, Amarachi treats her boyfriend, Henry, with love. This attitude and approach cements their relationship to the point that Henry proposes to her. Thus in both of these films women are not treated as subordinates. Rather, women are treated as equal to their male partners. Each of these men is seen as loving and respecting his female partner. Squire (1994) supports the above observation. He attests that television or films in the form of video or through cable television enhance women's power to negotiate and renegotiate power relations in their environment.

Male participants also shared similar experiences regarding the role of these films as educative arenas rather than mere entertainment. A 27 year old male respondent from Kanengo indicated that the films taught him how to improve his communication skills within a relationship. He says the films are enabling him to strengthen his relationship with his wife as they now have built a better understanding of each other. He claims this is making their love stronger than before.

32. I have learned how to manage and resolve conflicts in my family. My wife and I come from different social and cultural backgrounds and this was a source of conflict as we had so many issues between us. We used to fight over petty issues. I now know how to handle her volatile temper and I show her that I do care about her. She appreciates my effort. (Kanengo, Lilongwe, 2013)

The above response may be understood against the background of gender based violence reportedly prevalent across all communities in Malawi. Patriarchal cultural practices that marginalise women in communities are reportedly the source of this social behaviour (Malawi Human Rights Commission Report, 2003). Males stand to benefit from this cultural practice at the expense of their female counterparts. With the emergence of Nollywood films that show processes of male-female mediation, more men than before have accessed a culture of negotiating with their spouses rather than using force to settle issues as is the case with respondent (32s) above.

In *The Royal Fight* male respondents have an opportunity to experience how the prince turned king, Ikenna, learned to listen to his wife, Dubem, and respect her opinion whenever differences arose despite his volatile temper. Beyond love, some respondents contended that the films enhance the viewers' romantic prowess. This 34 year old female respondent from Chikwawa testifies with reference to *Royal Fight, The Comforter and Not With My Daughter*:

33. These films teach me how to love my husband and show him that I do care about our love. At first I had no idea. I can now freely and openly call my husband such names I hear lovers call each other in films such as 'sweetheart', 'darling', 'honey'. (Chikwawa Focus Group, 2013).

Her husband, who also took part in the discussions, corroborated his wife's experience:

34. Since she became addicted to the films, she brings in something new to the bedroom. Hugging, kissing and caressing are now becoming the order of the day in our bedroom before love making. It makes us feel like a newlywed couple (A 40 year old male respondent from Chikwawa, 2013)

Responses (33) and (34) are complementary to each other. Respondents confessed that their attitude towards love and sexual relationships is now more positive than before. The respondent (34) indicated that couples enjoy their love and sex life more than before. They now express themselves more freely than before. Participants' responses therefore suggest that the films have helped them to improve their communication skills with their spouses. Most respondents cited *The Royal Fight* as an example. Others cited *The Pastor's Wife*, in particular, the leading male character, Pastor James who demonstrates passionate love for his troublesome wife, Sister Shade, against all odds.

Based on responses as exemplified above, I, therefore, argue that the emergence of Nollywood films in Malawian society suggests that they have potential to instigate social change. Change in gender relations is one such example. As more male viewers are likely to be influenced by the films, there is a greater likelihood that their perception and attitude towards female partners, colleagues and relations could change for the better and that they come to regard women as equal to them in capacity and ability. It is important to note that some if not most of these changes relate to women changing and men welcoming this.

In addition to honing skills on love and romance, most respondents indicated that the films teach them to be responsible people at home, in their communities and in society at large: some respondents attested that:

35. I have learned the art of being dad to my kids.to literally be present available for them...partaking in the care of our little children...before these films, I was convinced that it is a woman's business. (A 49 year old male respondent from Ntcheu, 2013)

With reference to the above extract, the respondent makes a comparison between fatherhood of today and that of his childhood. He openly declares that this change results from his experience with Nollywood films. This suggests that he has learned to respond positively to the demands of fatherhood or parenthood in the modern era when a man may equally participate in child care unlike in the past when it was considered the sole role of the mothers. This respondent found it desirable to become a father he has been watching in the films, he observes this different portrayal of fatherhood and is encouraged to emulate it. The fact that the film depicts characters who share a similar background with the respondent's black sub-Saharan African, compels the viewer above in (35) to imitate his film hero. Thus, this would be the first step towards the construction of a positive perception of womanhood. This could lead womanhood be regarded in equal terms with the notion of maleness although this requires Nollywood to continue producing sufficient characters in scenarios of this nature.

Most respondents, especially from rural communities, view the films as a source of moral teaching. Due to the similarities in terms of culture and common practices between Malawi and Nigeria, they consider that the films carry great moral

authority. They said that all generations, the elderly, the young and the middle-aged have a lesson to learn from Nollywood films. Some respondents stated that the films teach them the need to love and show respect to others regardless of their social status.

36. Some films teach us to resist our insatiable love for money. You watch a woman abandoning a poor husband for a richer man only to regret later after the poor husband has turned a millionaire overnight. We watch many parents arrange marriages for their children because they want them to marry rich spouses only to regret later when the same boy or girl they rejected is swimming in riches. What we watch in these films are not fantasies but a mirror of what is happening in our backyards. (A 54 year old male respondent from Mabulabo Village Community, Mzimba, 2013)

This response resonates with the general belief in *uBuntu* that is widely practised across African communities, and locally referred to as *uMunthu* in Malawi. Earlier in the discussion on identity in chapter six of this thesis, the concept of *uBuntu* emerged as a dominant feature among the participants in relation to their viewing experience of Nollywood films. As a dominant notion in moral teaching, *uBuntu* emphasises human kindness or a humane approach to life (see Mbiti, 1969). Thus it embodies the call for responsibility over the weak, vulnerable or underprivileged (see Malunga, 2009). Hence, the moral teachings embedded in the films reflect or articulate how the philosophy of *uBuntu* is present in them. As discussed in chapter five, characters in the films *The Comforter*, *Royal Fight* and *The Last Vote* epitomise the *uBuntu* philosophy. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the princess-turned-queen, Dubem manifests *uMunthu* in *Royal Fight*. In *The Comforter*, Henry's girlfriend, Amarachi, showed compassion to his aunt despite the fact that she is the

source of her predicament. As a collective effort, women belonging to the association of Market Women in *The Last Vote* displayed an altruistic spirit by unselfishly fighting for the economic and social justice of their fellow women and nation.

Christakis & Zimmerman (2007) discuss the effectiveness of using entertainment to educate the masses and attempt to bring about behavioural change. Their findings revealed that exposing pre-school kids to violent TV viewing leads to violent behaviours. They argue that entertainment is proving to be an effective model of modern day teaching and learning. As Nollywood films are easily accessible and cheaply sourced on the markets in all corners of Malawi, there is the possibility that the audiences may be influenced in various ways. With regard to this study, there is a potential for audiences to appropriate their mind set and form positive opinion about women free of any stereotype. Werner's (2006) findings on the influence of Brazilian *telenovelas* suggest a possibility for audiences to adopt and adapt characters behaviour into their everyday life. Though Werner does not discuss the extent to which such influence occurred, it still leaves the impression of the likelihood of the films' social impact on the viewers.

However, not all films were applauded as a platform for socially and morally acceptable teachings. Some respondents accused the films of exerting a bad influence on viewers. They argued that some films promote witchcraft, *juju*, cultism and other manipulative practices that may impact negatively on the viewers, especially younger audiences. In most cases, women are depicted as culprits in the

films which they claimed are promoting questionable teachings to the audiences. This 61 year old female respondent from the urban community of Lunzu commented:

37. We see in the films, when marriages are on the verge of breaking down often women are depicted seeking the intervention of witch or traditional doctors. The witch doctors are seen offering these desperate women love portions or juju to save their relationships. In many cases it works and the power of juju is exonerated. Who doesn't want to save her marriage at any cost if she still believes in it and loves her man? It is no wonder that now some women even in town have resorted to using our own sources of juju to solve their marriage issues. I sometimes hear them saying if it works in Nigeria...as their films show, why can't it work in reality with us here? Magic and superstitions everywhere in Nollywood...even Dubem's act of offering gifts to the elders as a way of appeasing the ancestor in order for her to have a baby...it's all superstition. (Lunzu Focus Group, Blantyre, 2013).

Akpabio (2007) shares the concerns of the respondent in this extract. He too criticises some Nollywood films on their propagation of questionable cultural values and practices: "female genital mutilation, polygamy, extra-marital affairs, elopement, rituals, cultism, betrayal, robbery, assassinations, witchcraft and incest" (138). Such observation and concern prompted the industry's regulatory body, The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) of Nigeria, to issue guidelines for the film producers in which it calls into question the portrayal of violence, crime, sex, pornography, vulgarity, and obscenity in their productions (NFVCB, 2000). The body labels such representation as morally and socially corrupt in the estimation of Nigerian society. Consequently, this saw the regulatory body moving to impose a ban on some films accusing them of promoting cannibalism and failing to uphold the

nation's cultural values. Some of the films that were banned include *I Hate My Village*, *Shattered Home*, *Outcast 1 & 2*, *Night Out (Girls For Sale)*, *Omo Empire*, *Issakaba 4*, *Terrorist Attack* and *Unseen Forces*.

While agreeing with the observations expressed by the respondents regarding the extent to which some of the Nollywood films appear to 'go overboard' in their portrayal of some practices and beliefs, I would argue that some of the accusations made against the portrayal are grounded in religion rather than in culture. As discussed earlier, Malawi is a predominantly religious nation. Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions and have had an insurmountable influence on people's life and culture for a long time (Chakanza et al., 1987; Bone, 1982). It is common knowledge that what can be identified as current Malawian cultural practice is either Christian-based or Moslem-based. It has been argued previously that Christianity and Islam destabilised the traditional African/-Malawian cultural practices by imposing on the colony their cultural values. This resulted in traditional cultural values becoming diluted.

It can therefore be suggested that most respondents in the study were influenced by their religious beliefs, which inform their selective interpretation of female representation in films. Such religious biases are often critical of African cultural practices, and in most cases, unfairly so. The film *Royal Fight* is a case in point to support the assertion of selective interpretation due to religious biases. Confronted with the problem of barrenness, the leading female character, Dubem, accompanied by her mother-in-law visits her childhood village to seek reconciliation with her

ancestral gods and the elders. She performs rituals to appease the gods and ancestral spirits. In discussing this film, most respondents accused the lead female character of indulging in ungodly activities as shown in her resort to consult the elders and offer sacrifices to the gods. They described her action not only as ungodly but also immoral: “This is Satanism...evil.” one female respondent from Mzimba Boma Focus Group remarked emotionally. One would be surprised to learn that it is in fact a rural based community participant who objected to Dubem’s involvement with the witch doctor rather than be the first one to understand this common customary practice in African societies including Malawi. It could be argued that the indifference noted in the urban participants regarding this issue may be due to the fact that their religious conviction in relation to the values of Christianity or Islam is more liberal than their counterparts in the rural communities.

SECTION TWO

ROLE MODELLING

Socrates and Protagoras long ago discussed whether virtues like courage and temperance could be taught. Suspicious of Sophists' claims to teach virtues for fees, Socrates argued that if virtues could be taught, teachers of virtues could be universally recognised. Protagoras countered powerfully that virtues could and indeed are taught by parents, friends, spouses, early childhood stories, and colleagues. Where Socrates appeared to argue that no one teaches virtues, Protagoras argued that everyone teaches them. (Pence, 1983: 189)

The above quote underlines the importance of role models in behavioural or social change. Despite the apparent differences in their notion of teaching virtues, the two philosophers appear to agree that an exemplary life is a great teacher for the masses. This is what can be referred to as role modelling. Cress et al. (2008) posit that learning through role models occurs through observation, and is a complex mix of conscious and unconscious activities. In their thesis of how role modelling is a more powerful teaching strategy than mentoring, they contend that:

Active reflection on the process can convert an unconscious thought that can be translated into principles and action. In an equally powerful process, observed behaviours are unconsciously incorporated into the belief patterns and behaviours of the students. Role models are different from mentors. Role models inspire and teach by example, often while they are doing other things. (Cress et al., 2008: 718)

The above quote defines role modelling and what it implies. As indicated by the authors, it can be concluded therefore that role modelling is about inspiration and

example. The previous section discussed how the respondent audiences in Malawi place Nollywood films in their life; many of them stated that the characters act as their teachers in their everyday life. For the viewers to change their old ways and adopt the perceived new ways or culture, role-modelling may be called for. In watching the films, both male and female viewers identified their own role models. Some commented that they are inspired by the character's personalities such as courage, creativity and bravery. One teenage female respondent shared her viewing experience. She clearly states how some of the films' female characters acted as a role model for her:

38. I started watching these films when my brother bought his first ever satellite dish in 2004. This channel, I mean to say Movie Magic, featured a lot of Nigerian videos. In those first days of my TV film viewing, I felt a great appeal whenever I saw a woman judge or a woman lawyer in the movie. There was this particular film whose title I can't remember, where the woman lawyer was outstanding in arguing a case in defence of her client in a court of law. Looking at her; a woman and a black woman for that matter, inspired me a lot. By then I was doing my standard 4 and was only 9 years old. Since then I have always wanted to be like her and I want to be a lawyer one day. (A 19 year old female respondent from Chikwawa, 2013)

Most female participants agreed that the leading female characters in the films *Not With My Daughter*, *The Comforter*, *The Last Vote*, *The Royal Fight* and *Mr & Mrs* were role models in different ways. Male participants also identified some role models in the leading male characters. Most female respondents indicated that the leading female characters in *The Last Vote* and *Royal Fight* act as role models to

them since they are portrayed as leaders. This respondent from Mzimba Boma Community Focus Group commented:

39. I am moved by the way the Queen organises and manages the royal household plus the entire kingdom in the absence of her dying husband, the king. She defuses tensions in the house among the members of the royal family. Her daughter-in-law too is following in her foot-steps. She provides sound leadership advice to her husband, the young king. She is available to everybody in the family and provides help and passionate advice to whoever is facing emotional problems among the royal household. (A 24 year old respondent from Mzimba, 2013)

Another female participant from the same group made a similar observation. She applauded active involvement in politics by the Market Women Association in *The Last Vote* in the wake of the nation's rampant corruption:

40. It is these women who join forces with the chief of staff in the president's office to campaign against corrupt and greedy politicians. It is these women who use their numbers in the National Assembly to influence other members within the House to vote against the purported impeachment of the president which is being engineered by disgruntled senior politicians who are frustrated by his anti-graft drive. We need more of these women in our Malawi today. (A 41 year old female respondent from Mzimba, 2013)

Responses (39) and (40) above highlight the reactions of the female participants in respect to the attraction of the crucial roles played by female characters in the films. As alluded to earlier in this discussion, when viewers watch these films, the experience they have is real. I previously argued in the discussion on identity that the fact that these films are made by and acted by black Africans in a black African country is enough to compel these women audiences to treat them as real. Although this does not imply that the viewers do not understand the films' fiction status, it

suggests that whenever these women audiences watch fellow black African women taking part in leadership roles, some of them are inspired by the heroics played by the female characters. This, in some instances, compels some viewers to emulate the characters in the film. Mulvey (1975) points out how women viewers prefer the experience of watching a heroine over a hero in her essay *Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1989). She argues “.....the emotions of those women accepting “masculinisation” while watching action movies with the male hero are illuminated by the emotions of a heroine of a melodrama whose resistance to a ‘correct’ feminine position is the crucial issue at stake” (Mulvey, 1975:29).

It can be argued that the role of Nollywood films as a platform to display role models for female audiences cannot be overemphasised. It is common knowledge that issues of power relations remain a major social discourse in Malawian society. This leads to the suggestion that the lack of role models leads female members of Malawian society to be resigned to fate. Eagly and Karau (2002) posit that the perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles lead to prejudices against women as leaders in favour of men. They argue that a leadership role is generally less favourably perceived when it is enacted by a woman. Hence, they conclude that it is more difficult for women to become leaders and to achieve success in leadership roles.

Following the responses in (38), (39) and (40) above, it can be suggested that the female characters in Nollywood films serve as role models to female audiences in Malawi. Consequently, this would therefore help, albeit in a very contained fashion,

to bridge the gap in power relations between men and women at all levels. Arguably, this scenario could be as a result of the audiences' change of perception and attitude towards women that could shift over time. There are many scenarios in the case studies films which the respondents cited as inspiring, motivating and role-modelling:

41. Ada demonstrates to us that she does not take nonsense from men who abuse their wives in *Not With My Daughter*. In *The Comforter* we see the girl standing firm in her conviction and faith in God and she behaves honourably in trying to save life of the woman who betrayed her. We also see how Dubem persevered and endured her barren situation in *The Royal Fight*. She remains strong and steadfast with optimism despite the public ridicule she sometimes is subjected to by her detractors in the royal household. In *Mr& Mrs* we witness Susan as role model who despite being side lined and disowned by her husband and his family, fights her way back and earns the love and respect of her husband and her father in-law. We need more of these women among us. (A 36 year old female respondent from Mabulabo, 2013)

This extract suggests that women viewers participating in the study identified some female characters as their role model in terms of their fight against male dominance. The extract (41) summarises *Royal Fight*, *Mr& Mrs.*, and *The Comforter*, where, according to the respondent, the leading characters display exemplary behaviour that is relevant in the present day African/ Malawian context. In other words, it can be argued that the behaviour displayed by the characters is socially acceptable and contains attributes that resonate with African/- Malawian traditional practices. In *Royal Fight*, the leading female character, Dubem, is humble, a good listener and at the same time is strong enough to protect her interests and integrity. She respectfully gives counsel to her husband, Ikenna and humbly takes charge of the affairs of the

royal household when she becomes queen. Similarly, in *Mr& Mrs*, Susan earns the right to equal power relations with her husband only after she demonstrates that she can stand on her own. In *The Comforter*, the leading female character, Amarachi assumes the role of heroine when she saves the life of her boyfriend's aunt who previously destroyed her life.

In all the three films mentioned above the dominant feature is that of African-ness. It can be argued that the portrayal that is given in the three films' leading female characters is what is perceived and accepted in the African/-Malawian context as being an African woman: caring, understanding, wise, a good listener, strong personality and so forth (see Amadiume, 1987; Oyewumi, 1997). These attributes are clearly articulated by the respondent in extract (41) and can be seen throughout these three films and their characters. This is in line with Afro-centric feminists' positions who propose that African gender and sex roles should be studied using African contextualised theories rather than borrowing from non-African or Euro-centric theories (Oyewumi, 1997; Oyewumi, et al., 2005).

Further to the above observation, Ada in *Not With My Daughter* demonstrates that she can be a role model when she insists on being treated with fairness by her husband, Hussein, despite the fact that she lives in an environment that is highly patriarchal. Here is a woman who fights for her rights against all odds. As a result of her resilience against oppression, her husband and his people succumb to her and hence are forced to accord her the respect she deserves. However, her portrayal is subject to contestations as some respondents opined that she goes too far in her fight

for her interest in the household. Some argued that Ada is rude and does not show that she equally values the culture of her husband and his people. Thus, this suggests that Ada is portrayed in a Euro-centric way, which is seen as flawed in the context of the African cultural perspective (Kisiang'ani, 2005). Hence, some respondents dismissed the character of Ada as irrelevant when it comes to the question of role-modelling:

42. To me Ada is arrogant. That is not women's empowerment. This is not gender equality. We have to respect our in-laws, our husbands and their culture. Why marry into a culture and to a people you naturally look down on? (Queried a 44 year old female respondent from Mabulabo Focus Group, 2013)

Some female participants from Ntcheu also joined fellow female participants across some focus groups in their critical scrutiny of the role of other significant females depicted in the other films. They felt that the leading female character, Amarachi, in *The Comforter* let them down towards the end of the film:

43. We have nothing but praise for her role in the film. She is successful as a career woman at her employer's company. Her conduct is superb and wins the heart of everybody watching. She even plays a heroic role in saving the life of the same woman who stabbed her in the back, Henry's aunt. Stupidly she opts to kill herself in the end. This is a sign of weakness in her. I wonder what was going on in the heads of the producers to leave us with such a hopeless ending. (Lamented a 41 year old respondent from Ntcheu, 2013)

Although the character Susan in *Mr & Mrs* received a lot of praise from the female viewers as a role model to women, she attracted a different reaction among the

young, urban female participants. They argued that Susan's dual (twofold) character defeats her role as a model:

44. The first part is in sharp contrast to the second part. The first part presents us a submissive and passive character, really hopeless and uninspiring. The second part is what is outstanding and paints her as a woman of destiny and principles. The portrayal in this second part is done well. But how do we choose her as a role model with such a divided or conflicting role? (Queried a 20 year old female respondent from Lilongwe, 2013)

However, some respondents within the same focus groups considered the female characters in *The Comforter* and *Mr & Mrs* to be inspiring. The lead and supporting female characters in these films were appealing and inspiring as exemplified in the following extract:

45. In the *Comforter*, Amarachi excels in her work. She transforms the company's fortunes. I am not surprised she is entrusted with the finances of the company. In *Mr & Mrs* a friend of Susan performs exceptionally well at work and she is awarded with successive promotions to the extent of being posted to work at the company's head office. We can all learn from these two young and ambitious ladies in these films (A 21 year old female respondent from Lilongwe, 2013).

The assertions made in extracts (44) and (45) by the young urban female participants were challenged by a 61 year old female respondent from the urban community of Lunzu. Unlike her counterparts from Lilongwe as depicted in extracts (44) and (45) above, she argued that the success of Susan's friend is overshadowed by her failing marriage. She says this makes it unacceptable for anyone to perceive her as a role model. She argues that a successful woman in a Malawian context should achieve a

happy marriage above everything. An elderly respondent countered the two respondents (44) and (45) outright:

46. Here is a woman who everybody will point out as successful because of her progression at work. But as a married woman she is proven to be a failure. She can't take care of her home. She ends up forcing her husband to sleep with a housemaid because she is most of the time away from home, coming back very late at night. She is one sided and fails to balance her role as a family woman and a career woman. She is not exemplary (A 65 year old female respondent from Lunzu, 2013).

Extracts (38-46) illustrate the ongoing debate on viewers' perceptions of role models across some of the focus groups among female respondents. Despite the fact that most focus groups identified common characters as role models, there were divided opinions within and across the focus groups. For instance, what was singled out as strength in the character of Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife* by the Lilongwe Focus Group was defined as a weakness by the Mzimba Focus Group. Arguably, this is due to the suggestion that different communities operate within different social and cultural constructs (Lakoff, 2004).

Consequently, these constructs determine the specificities of gender and sex roles of that particular society or community. Hence, this affects the relationship between male and females in different communities. In the case of this study, therefore, cultural differences such as the matrilineal and patrilineal social systems played a part (Mandala, 1984). Elsewhere in this chapter I have discussed how in some groups, women in matrilineal communities were identified as active participants in the study as opposed to women in the patrilineal communities. Previous studies

reveal that this is due to the fact that women in these cultural communities have land ownership rights that give them bargaining power when negotiating with their husbands (White, 2010). Culturally, men leave their family homes and settle in the women's family homes. In contrast, women in patrilineal communities leave their family homes and settle in the men's family homes (ibid). Arguably, women in patrilineal cultural communities have very minimal bargaining power in relationships owing to the social constructs surrounding their marriage arrangements.

However, a close analysis of the responses within each focus group further reveals that members of the same group, who were predominantly local residents from the same area sharing a similar cultural or ethnic background, differed in their reactions to the question of role-modelling. For instance, in discussing the portrayal of Susan in *Mr & Mrs*, there was divided opinion over this character. One male participant bemoaned Susan's liberated lifestyle after the divorce while from the same group, a female member applauded it. The variance in responses of the male and female respondent could be attributed to gender. The male respondent would more likely want to see a woman acting according to the social constructs that define a woman to behave in a manner that is socially constructed. One of these social constructs that constrain women in patriarchal communities is the notion of being submissive to a man.

In addition to the above factors, there are other sociological factors at play. Members of the same church were at times not forthcoming with their responses to the film: some were passive while others participated fully but gave very cautious responses

that would not compromise their identity as members of a particular religious institution. For instance, the portrayal of polygamy and African medicine received a lot of criticism from some group members who wanted to give the impression that they are defenders of their church. One could argue that, given their position and indeed association with the church, it was impossible for them to express their critical opinion regarding the portrayal in the film. The presence of other members of the church compromised their freedom of expression and probably they avoided attracting undue attention in taking a position conflicting with the official stand of their religious institution.

Other than the above factors, power relations also played a part in audiences' participation that could have affected their contribution to the study. This was observed in the groups that contained members of the same family. Parents were not comfortable in expressing their opinions in front of their children. Likewise, children were not free to express their views in the presence of their parents. Some of the parents or children either opted out or asked to be interviewed separately (see Sieter et al., 1989). It is worth noting for this study, that some women were uncomfortable in expressing themselves frankly in front of their husbands. Likewise, some husbands were uncomfortable in front of their wives. Again, in these cases, some of them either asked to opt out or requested to be interviewed separately.

This issue was evident when members of the same family participating in the same focus group gave responses that were probably self-censored in order to avoid offending or embarrassing other members of the family. Some indicated that they

avoided giving an opinion that would lead to disagreements with members of their families or their spouses. Some participants in this predicament confided in me that they were unable or afraid to freely express themselves. They worried they would expose their private lives. Since these were open discussions, some feared repercussions in their relationships. However, they were free during informal interviews. Some of the views expressed during the informal meetings were the same but in some instances these views differed from the focus group discussions. te Molder and Potter (2005) explain how audiences would give responses that were at variance during the data collection exercise and how field notes, taken during informal conversations, as I had done, would help to validate or invalidate the data.

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has discussed the perceived impact of cultural appropriations on Nollywood audiences in Malawi. The chapter has discussed appropriation in terms of the films' impact on the viewers. In this respect, the chapter examined the films' impact based on the respondents' perspective of what they make of the portrayals in the films.

In the first place, the chapter has shown the extent to which the characters in the films play as role models to the audiences. Respondents have indicated that the films taught them social, moral and personal aspects of life. Some respondents even positioned the films as guides for their professional and personal survival skills.

Secondly, the chapter has demonstrated how the audiences model their lifestyle on the films' actors or characters. The chapter has shown that viewers, in the light of fan

base syndrome, would want to identify themselves with their favourite film star. In the context of Nollywood film and its enthusiasts in Malawi, it has been discussed that films act as informal teachers to the viewers. Thus, spectators model their lives on the film characters. In the case of this study, the characters, especially female characters, role-playing aspects of gender notions are likely to influence a viewer. In return, the audiences would contextualise such notions in their local settings or manifestations. Thus, the issue of appropriation is a key to the study of the films' potential to influence viewers with regard to their perception of womanhood as a result of Nollywood's portrayal of women. The next chapter therefore discusses implications of these appropriations to the study in relation to the films' perceived impact on audiences' gender relations.

CHAPTER NINE

9.0 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The central issue that the study has revealed is that the portrayal of women in the Nollywood film case studies has the potential to influence both male and female audiences to perceive women in the same way they perceive men. This chapter therefore will discuss the implications of such findings. The chapter will discuss the extent to which variances in audiences' reaction to films impact on their analysis of the films' portrayal of women. Then, the chapter will discuss the implications of such subjective responses to the films' portrayal of women to the continental agreed notions of African gender. I will argue that the diversity of cultures in the continent would make the identification of African gender notions difficult, and hence, a negotiated concept that accommodates differences while maintaining the common African-ness features would constitute a regional recognisable sense of gender.

For a correct organisation of the chapter, it has been divided as follows-: The first section will discuss changes in perception and attitude towards women among the general public. This change is derived from the responses of the participating audiences. Secondly, the chapter looks at variances in audiences' reaction and discusses factors underlining these diverse opinions to female representation in films. Finally, these variances in audiences' interpretation lead to the proposal for a

negotiated concept of African gender and the implications of this will be considered in the final section.

THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS FEMALES AND THE IMPLICATIONS TO THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF WOMEN IN MALAWI

Based on the responses from participants across all the focus groups, there are suggestions that the films have the potential to change audiences' perceptions and attitudes towards women in Malawi. Respondents indicated that exposure to the films with female characters depicted as powerful and influential career women such as Amarachi in *The Comforter*, Linda in *Mrs & Mrs* and Mrs Igwe in *Last Vote* is likely to inspire female audiences in Malawi and instils confidence in them. At the same time, through the portrayal of women through these characters, the films are likely to challenge male audience's notions of female or sexual stereotypes.

There can be a logical expectation that, with time and with the production of more films containing similar characters, male audiences are likely to shift their long held low opinion, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards women. They are likely going to consider them as equals. The data contain evidence of men claiming that the emergence of Nollywood films in Malawi has already started to show glimpses of some impacts.

Arguably the films have changed the perspectives people held for a long time that did not reflect well on women. Likewise, women audiences that participated in the study confessed that the gap in relationship between themselves and their male

friend, husband and workmates is not as wide as it has used to be before these films became common. Thus, such experiences as claimed by these audiences have implication in the sense that they suggest that there is a possibility for the films to challenge the structural female stereotypes in audiences. This could in turn make audiences reconsider their perception of women as lower class citizens. This has further implications for the future of women in Malawian society as the following paragraph will demonstrate.

In the first place, through constant exposure to the films that cast female characters as heroines as in the case of Amarachi in *The Comforter*, Linda in *Mr & Mrs* and Mrs Igwe in *Last Vote*, male audiences could gradually come to accept that women have similar abilities as men. This could be a recipe for change of perception and attitudes towards women among the male audiences which in the long term could turn out to be the experience at society level.

Secondly, it is worth to note that the issue of public perception and attitude towards women in Malawi should be understood in the context of both male and female spectatorship. Arguably, women also have low opinions of themselves and their fellow women at all levels. From the discussion of the findings in chapter six to eight, there is a sense that women would rather have a man as leader than a fellow woman. This is an indication that women have little or no confidence in their own abilities to take up challenging roles in both public and private institutions. A case in point is the reaction of the church women to Sister Shade's position on her position regarding male dominance in church leadership in *The Pastor's Wife*. The reaction

confirms the observation that women too have stereotypical views of fellow women and often consider themselves as limited in abilities, and hence rank themselves as second class citizens to men.

However, with the portrayals in *The Pastor's Wife* and *Not With My Daughter* which feature Sister Shade and Adanma respectively, the films may provide an opportunity to inspire women to regain their confidence. With time and more exposure to Nollywood films, Malawian women have the potential to emulate these character. In the process the women audiences could challenge sexual, social and gender stereotypes against them by the patriarchal dominant society and by men in particular. Thus, the films are likely to garner confidence in female audiences. Likewise, male audiences, having been challenged by female characters as discussed earlier, are likely to change their attitude towards women, and hence they could reduce or eliminate female stereotypes. In the end, therefore, the films have the potential to influence both male and female audiences' perception of women.

VARIANCES IN AUDIENCES' REACTION TO FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND THE IMPLICATION TO TRANSBORDER GENDER NOTIONS IN AFRICA

In the first place, in chapter six, the discussion of the findings has shown that although identity was a dominant factor for audiences' preference of Nollywood, close analysis of the viewers' reaction to the films in the discussion chapter (seven) further informs that this is not homogenous. In some instances, viewers had divided opinions over the portrayal of women in the characters of Linda and Susan in *Mr &*

Mrs. Dubem in *Royal Fight*, Amarachi in *The Comforter* and Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife*. Discussions in chapter seven give accounts of such scenarios. In some cases, opinions varied from one focus group to another, whilst in other instances, participants within the same focus group held differing opinions. Despite the fact that in some groups only very few held contrary views to the popular positions, as a qualitative study, such minority opinion were still admitted as noteworthy or relevant. This confirms Bakhtin's (1986) concept of *polyphony* and *dialogism* in which he posits that the voice of one person is unique and irreplaceable. He argues that each voice has its own perspective, its own validity, and its own narrative weight.

As discussed in chapter seven, the study shows that participants' responses were influenced by their religion, age and social backgrounds which form an important component of their culture. Thus the question of subjectivity is critical in the interpretation and understanding of audiences' opinions for the purpose of this study. This is what Bell (1984) describes as non-linguistic factors that affect the way audiences may respond to the effect of a film. He contends that the style shifts in terms of setting and topic are largely responsive to audiences' circumstances.

Consequently, the data collected from the respondents are expected to vary according to their educational, cultural and social backgrounds. Bakhtin (1986) discusses the notion of multiple responses among audiences to a single action or occurrence. He claims that such a scenario has the potential to allow researchers to come up with credible and effective results in their investigations. It therefore

follows that these multiple responses helped the study to acquire data that is representative regarding the way viewers might interpret female portrayals in Nollywood films and the extent to which such portrayals could impact on their opinion of women.

It is therefore inevitable that variances in audiences' response have some implications in relation to the African gender debate. In the first place, it becomes difficult for audiences to have a clear point of reference of what gender in African terms means let alone in Malawian culture.

Secondly, as the discussions in chapter seven have shown that Malawian audiences' subjective responses were due to cultural differences, it raises the question of what is the model of a culturally Malawian concept of the ideal woman. This could therefore form the basis for a claim of an African concept of gender.

Thirdly, such differences in gender opinions would in the end raise legitimacy issues: any proposal to identify one cultural aspect and ascribe it to Malawi could risk facing resistance. As such, any claim would be subjected to challenges by players of other cultural communities who would not want to be dominated. Thus, subjective approach to cultural interpretation makes the task of identifying what could constitute a Malawian gender concept rather uneasy, and hence, it leaves the definition of the ideal African notion of gender open for a wider debate. As a result, this study, therefore, proposes a negotiated approach to defining Africa gender. The next section therefore discusses in detail this proposed 'negotiated' African notion of gender (see Hall, 1997).

TOWARDS NEGOTIATED AFRICAN GENDER NOTIONS

With reference to the various extracts in the discussion chapters (six- eight), there is the need to call for a negotiated identification of African gender. Chapter six has extensively discussed the issue of identity in relation to the commonalities that exist among African cultures despite the localised differences between them, which cannot be ignored. Gender relations are central to the issue of identity in this respect. Chapter seven presented how audiences subjectively read and analyse the portrayals of women in films. The extracts presented in chapter seven suggest that age and social, religious and cultural identities are among the elements that affect how audiences read, understand and interpret films' portrayals. Chapter seven further discussed how the likelihood of aspects of new cultures as a result of Malawians' exposure to Nollywood films could be engaged in various processes before they could become domesticated into the local cultures. The implication of this process to the identification of Africa's notions of gender could be two-fold.

Firstly, local Malawian audiences are likely to resist this urgency for change as can be seen in the discussion of the characters Sister Shade, Linda and Adanma in *The Pastor's Wife*, *Mr & Mrs* and *Not With My Daughter* respectively. Earlier discussions in chapter seven indicate how women appear to victimise their fellow women characters owing to cultural and religious stereotypes championed by male patriarchal dominance. This may be because women are seemingly indoctrinated by the socialisation processes that possibly legitimise women to be submissive to men. Secondly, in contrast to the above position, audiences could accept and adopt the influence that the films bring in their real lives. For the purpose of this study, gender

and social relations phenomena are among critical areas that are in need of redress and the films could influence the change in this perspective. In conclusion, therefore, formation of a cultural hybridity among the recipient communities (due to a possible fusion of culture adopted in films and their own) as a result of Nollywood films' exposure has the implication of paving the way for the negotiation of the definition of African gender. Therefore, this thesis proposes a 'negotiated' notion of African gender in which African concepts are to be considered as constituting an engendered approach to gender and social relations that would imply men and women enjoy equal power relations.

The above proposed 'negotiated' notions of African gender (based on Nollywood's portrayal of women) reflect the views among some African feminist and gender scholars. Just like the film audiences, there is divided opinion over the African notion of gender that may be a reflection of the debate across the continent's diverse cultural societies. This has led to commentators describing the notion of African gender as 'porous' (Amadiume, 1987; 2000; Oyewumi, 1997; 2004). As discussed in chapter three, these two Afro-centric scholars argue against the ascribing of gender according to sex. They criticise the Western notion of determining gender according to biological attributes.

However, some scholarship on African feminism posits that an African gender concept cannot be defined as a standalone phenomenon. Bakare-Yusuf (2004) and Nnaemeka (1994) contend that the question of gender in modern Africa is contentious, noting that traditional African societies cannot do without Western

influence. Both Nnaemeka and Bakare-Yusuf argue that the issue of gender in African culture, bearing in mind its cultural diversity, should be an on-going negotiated process. I have already discussed in chapter three Nnaemeka's proposition of 'nego-feminism' which calls for a negotiated concept of gender relations. And, this thesis borrows from her concept in looking at it as a product of continentalisation and from a Pan-Africanist perspective of gender.

Thus, this study argues that, in the light of rapid changes in present-day Africa coupled with the diversity of cultures across the continent, a negotiated concept of gender notions could be ideal for the South-South countries. This would be a responsive approach in accordance with the pace at which the films are circulating, which, as noted in many sources (Haynes, 2010), at a fast rate on the continent. In this way, I contend that the films would help in facilitating the process of negotiating specific African gender relation codes. Such gender codes could develop or create unique Afro-centric notions of gender that would have a homogeneous identity of the continent's diverse cultures. This would be a type of continentalisation process that would facilitate the Pan-Africanist approach to the definition of gender concept that some scholars, including the present one, claim Nollywood as the agent (see Omoniyi, 2014).

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has discussed the implications of the study's findings in relation to the portrayal of gender relations in Nollywood and the film audiences' reaction to these portrayals in Malawi. In summary, the chapter has discussed that the findings, which

among other issues reveal that the films have a potential to influence social change in appealing to the local viewers, and in the process change their lifestyles in a small and gradual way. This being the case, the findings have several implications which this chapter has discussed.

In the first place, the exposure to films would enable both male and female participants to perceive women fairly in the same way they perceive men. Secondly, because of cultural diversity even within Malawian society, the study suggests a 'negotiated' approach to defining African gender. The chapter has argued that a negotiated concept of African gender could leave us to appreciate Nollywood as an agent for promoting equal power relations between men and women. Thus, this proposed 'negotiated' concept of African gender would be a new 'Pan-Africanist' notion of gender.

Consequently, the study argues that the proposed concept does not have to be consciously incorporating Western concepts of gender as suggested in Bakare-Yusuf (2004) and Nnaemeka (2004). It should rather be based on the commonalities that characterise and identify the African consensus of gender, which, I argue should reflect the continent's cultural diversity. The next chapter, therefore, provides a summarised account of the thesis that highlights the overall significance of the study in relation to the impact of Nollywood films on Malawi audiences. The chapter further highlights the relevance of this study in Nollywood scholarship and recommendations for future research.

Lastly, the study notes that participants across all the focus groups failed to come out clear with woman to woman sexual or gender oppression that was a hallmark of sexual, gender, class, cultural and religious stereotypes. Participants managed to identify selected or individual cases of woman to woman oppression and they further identified the source of such relation which was largely due to the factors listed above. For instance, the portrayal of Susan's oppression by Kenneth's mother as discussed elsewhere in *Mr & Mrs* has been due to class stereotypes and the same can be said of Amarachi by Henry's aunt and mother in *The Comforter*. Further to this, the oppression of Adanma by Hussein's mother in *Not With My Daughter* has been attributed to cultural and religious stereotypes that have their basis in sexual and gender stereotypes. However, none of the participating individual or group came out clearly to analyse the basis of woman to woman oppression beyond the given sexual and gender stereotypes. Chapter nine will discuss the implication of this category of oppression and its implication to scholarly efforts to identify and define the continental notion of gender across all African societies.

PART V

CHAPTER TEN

10 CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a recap of the main issues covered and discussed in this thesis. The chapter summarises the study's objectives. This is followed by a summary of main discussions on the study's findings and implications of these findings. The chapter also includes a statement on the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research and practice are outlined.

A significant difficulty is the lack of research on the effects of Nollywood in Malawi, and its audiences. Whilst this presented a challenge in the project, it justifies the study as ground-breaking. Thus, the chapter concludes with the overall value of the thesis and the contribution it has made to knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study were to explore the extent to which Nollywood films have impacted on local audiences in Malawi in general. In particular, the study explored the effect of the films on gender relations between male and female members of Malawian society.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

To summarise, the study came up with several key findings regarding audiences' reaction to female representation in Nollywood films they watched for the purpose of this study.

Nollywood popularity

First and foremost, the study has established that Nollywood films are the most popular films among Malawian audiences. Both the pilot field study (2012) and the main field study (2013) confirm this position. Respondents cited several factors that make Nollywood 'extremely' popular among the viewers. Cultural identity is among the key factors that appeal to the audiences. For instance, in chapter six, respondents gave references to cultural similarities between them and the issues or storylines in the films. The respondents further identified themselves with the film characters and the environment in which the characters operate. An example of cultural similarity that the respondents noted was uBuntu philosophy which is locally known as uMunthu in Malawian context. For the purpose of this study, respondents drew parallels of the manifestation of uBuntu among Nollywood female characters to Malawian women, which they indicated represents the uniform attribute of the cinematic representation of Nigerian society and themselves in the real world.

As an extension of the uBuntu notion, the study found that the mere fact that these films are produced in Nigeria by Nigerians and feature Nigerian actors presents a big appeal to fellow African viewers in the continent. Thus, geographical proximity of Nigeria (a sub-Saharan country) with so much in common with Malawi in terms of its geographical outlook or physical features, its politics and socio-economic

activities, provide compelling factors for Malawian audiences to have special relation to the films.

There are also other factors that the study has established that make Nollywood a premier choice for film enthusiasts in Malawi. The films are cheap and easily accessible. Both pilot and main field study reports reveal that the culture of piracy has accelerated the oversupply of the films on the market at a much cheaper price. The communal aspect of lifestyle as discussed in chapter one within the notion of uBuntu further helps the accessibility of the films by the viewers. Those with no television or video player can go to neighbours, friends or relatives to watch the films. Just as their counterparts in Nigeria as discussed in chapter two and three of the thesis, the market places, shops, barbershops, salons and restaurants have televisions installed in them, and Nollywood films are shown to entertain their clients. There are several commercial video parlours that charge clients a relative low fee per view (see Appendix).

Other than the above factors, the presence of a commercial television channel in Africa, Multichoice DSTV enhances the accessibility of the films. DSTV has a special channel, Africa Magic that is dedicated to air Nollywood films throughout. There are also a number of free-to-air digital television channels that show these films. Malawians who are privileged to own satellite dishes and decoders have access to these free films (see Appendix). As per uBuntu notion and as individuals with strong beliefs in a communal lifestyle, those owning the satellite dishes with access to free Nollywood films extend the gesture to accommodate their neighbours,

friends and relatives to watch along with them. Thus, the factors summarised form the basis for Nollywood's popularity and create an opportunity for the film's ability or potential to influence or impact its audiences. Therefore, Nollywood's popularity gives an opportunity for the viewers to be exposed to its portrayal of females. This study has therefore explored the extent to which the audiences react to these portrayals and the likely impact it has on their gender and social relations.

Oppression of women by fellow women

The main focus of the study was to investigate the portrayal of women in Nollywood films and this involved establishing the extent women are perceived in Malawian society. Chapter five of data analysis shows how women in *Mr & Mrs*, *Royal Fight*, *The Comforter*, *The Pastor's Wife*, *Not With My Daughter* and *Last Vote* used patriarchal power dynamics to oppress fellow women. Most of these women (*Mr & Mrs*, *Royal Fight* and *Not With My Daughter*) used the patriarchal structures in extended family set-up to oppress the fellow women married to their sons and brothers. In some films, women oppressed fellow women in extended family set-ups due to class stereotyping as in *Mr & Mrs* and *The Comforter*. In such cases, it is class and gender stereotypes that are at play other than sexual stereotypes as chapter five has indicated.

Society as oppressive superstructure of women

Findings of the study reveal that social structures or society are at the centre of women's oppression in Malawi. Chapter one and two have indicated how the patriarchal society of Malawi is responsible for oppressing women due to social, sexual and gender stereotypes. The same chapters have shown how women in

matrilineal cultural communities, despite patriarchal tendencies, have a comparative advantage over their patrilineal counterparts.

Chapters one and two have also shown that inheritance and propriety rights are at the core of power relations in matrilineal and patrilineal cultural communities. The study has discussed that in matrilineal cultural communities, it is the man who lives in a woman's family land and hence ownership of land, properties and children belongs to the women. This inevitably leaves the woman with better negotiation power over a man than her counterpart in a patrilineal community. The opposite scenario happens with women in patrilineal cultural communities.

The implication of this is that women, using the class stereotype oppress fellow women under the cover of patriarchal cultural practices as shown in *Mr & Mrs, Not With My daughter and Royal Fight*.

Subjectivity in notions of gender relations and womanhood

As discussed in chapter five of the thesis, the theme of identity manifests commonalities in the way Nigerian cultures and their Malawian counterparts regard and conceive gender relations between males and females. From the discussion, it is evident that some of the practices portrayed in the films are regarded as acceptable by some viewers but deplorable by others. In the end, the study suggests that there are some elements of gender relations common across African cultures that connote positive attitudes towards and perceptions of women in African societies. The study therefore argues that they ought to be 'continentalised' using Nollywood films (see chapter 1; Omoniyi, 2014 on the concept of continentalisation).

However, the study reveals that respondents had opposing or conflicting views regarding their notions of African women. Therefore, the study demonstrates the emergence of subjectivity as one of the key themes in the research. As shown in chapter six of the thesis, audiences interpreted and understood the portrayal based on their social contexts (Hall, 1996). Factors such as religion, culture, age, education and sex appeared to have informed the participants' reaction to female portrayals in the films. The audiences generally interpreted the films in relation to their understanding of the concepts of modernity, African-ness and gender relations.

In their discussions, audiences critiqued the concept of African-ness in opposition to foreign-ness, modernity in opposition to tradition, and gender relations in respect of the traditional African context and the 'Western' construed gender and social contexts (Hall, 1997). It was noted that the concept of gender relations amongst participants was highly informed by religion, education, age and location. Subjectivity helped to explain variances in respondents' interpretation of portrayals in films and this has an impact on how the concept of gender would be defined as a common phenomenon across the cultural divide in Malawi as well as Africa. This is where the question of Nollywood as a potential vehicle for continentalisation comes into consideration.

Potential for change to engendered perception

In general, the study has established that audiences found the films educative in their everyday practical life. Chapter seven provides a detailed account and discussion of collective as well as individual testimonies that support the fact that the films, as well as being entertaining, also have an educative function. Such an educative

function is relevant as it informs viewers' positive attitudes and perceptions of women.

Chapter one of the thesis contains detailed examples of studies that suggest the extent to which exposure to films has the potential to influence audiences as they respond to its representation (see Werner, 2006; Toure, 2007). There is assertion in the discussions (chapter one) that viewers prefer to follow films that star their respective favourite or popular characters. It is of little surprise that audiences are likely to use the characters' portrayal of their behaviour as a role model, for example in their choice of fashion, food and drinks. Thus, the issue of gender relations arguably stands to benefit from such role-modelling. It can be argued that should a large population of Malawians become exposed to the cinematic portrayals that are either showing heroism in women and or challenging the status quo in men these have the potential to change the public mind-set towards women.

In relation to the theory of continentalisation and Pan-Africanism, the study thus identifies appropriation as a key towards the audiences' adoption and localisation of the films' portrayals into their mind-set. For the purpose of this study and its theoretical framework, namely, continentalisation, the thesis therefore argues that the films would propagate the homogenous gender concepts across the continent. The thesis further argues that the local viewers would appropriate to their respective context while at the same time maintaining some commonalities that could be identified as unified notions of African gender and social relations (see chapters 1, 8 and 9).

The following section therefore presents a summary of the implications of the above summarised study findings to the public perception of and attitude towards women in Malawi society. This could facilitate the intra-continental cultural flow as a demonstration of continentalisation of Pan-Africanist culture, knowledge and ideas. In this way, it could be argued that Nollywood is potentially a catalyst for homogenous gender concepts in Africa.

SUMMARY OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Popularity of Nollywood and its potential to influence an individual viewer

As discussed in chapters five, six, seven, eight and nine of the thesis, Nollywood films are the most popular of all film cultures in Malawi. On average, unofficial statistics that the study arrived at show that eight out of ten people who watch films in Malawi are exposed to Nollywood films. The study further revealed that seven out of ten film audiences in Malawi prefer Nollywood films to other films such as Hollywood, Bollywood, Japanese or Chinese films. The study indicates that on average, nine out of ten rural audiences prefer Nollywood films to other films and eight out of ten semi-urban audiences prefer Nollywood. In urban areas, seven out of ten audiences from low income and high density population backgrounds prefer Nollywood films and between four and five in every ten audiences from the elite, low density and high income backgrounds prefer Nollywood films.

It is worth noting that the urban population currently constitutes approximately 15-20 % of Malawi's population and access to Nollywood films is more likely in urban and semi-urban audiences as most of them own televisions and video players. Nonetheless, now there are pay-per-view video parlours across rural, semi-urban and

urban locations in Malawi. The study revealed that the rural and semi-urban audiences have limited access to televisions and this makes it difficult for them to have the opportunity to be exposed to films other than the popular Nollywood films. Unlike their rural counterparts, the urban dwellers have access to other film cultures and some audiences especially the elite have free-to-air television channels. Some subscribe to DStv channels giving them easy access to other films.

The study established that cultural identity was of central importance in explaining audience's preference for Nollywood films (chapter 5). The study demonstrated that whether urban or rural, Malawian audiences found the films relevant to their own real life situations. The study further revealed that women constitute the majority of Nollywood audiences regardless of their location, social status or income bracket. In addition to identity, the study asserts that this interest among women audiences was probably due to the fact that the films are presented as melodramas and this attracts more women audiences.

It therefore comes as no surprise when the study revealed that the audiences considered that the films have had some influence on their world outlook. Findings indicated that both male and female audiences participating in the research stated that the films have in one way or another changed the way they perceived the world. In particular, in a significant way for some and in a minor way for others, audiences of both sexes indicated that the films have given them a different perception of gender relations between men and women. Such audiences indicated that their

exposure to the films has gradually influenced them to regard women to be as capable as their male counterparts.

Potential for change in public's perception of gender and social relations between men and women

Building on the preceding discussion on the implication of the study, I argue that the films have a potential to effect change in social relations in Malawi. The findings have demonstrated that although the study was conducted using a small sample, it was sufficiently representative to cover Malawi's ethnic and linguistic groups. The study indicated that the sample was representative of the geographical, political and religious divide (chapter 4). Moreover, the study indicated that the sample was based on a representation of the population which included rural, semi-urban and urban residents. Above all, the sample can be considered reliable and representative as it employed participants from a variety of backgrounds: lower, middle and upper class:-educated, semi-illiterate and illiterate.

It can therefore be claimed that were the films to become easily accessible to most of the Malawian population, there is a possibility of a measurable social impact on gender and social relations between men and women in society. Chapters six to eight have shown accounts of Nollywood enthusiasts who confess in one way or the other how the films are slowly but surely becoming part of their reference point in terms of conformity to their social relations. Through their own admissions, the respondents, as shown in chapters six to eight, have claimed that as a result of their exposure to the films, they were adopting what they perceived acceptable and fair behaviour in the way they handle their opposite sex relations. The study argues therefore that

there is a possibility that these films can change the public perception of women at a wider level in society.

The study further observed that such incorporation of Nollywood inspired attitudes or perception is not a blind act on the part of the audiences. Chapters eight and nine have demonstrated how the participating audiences adopt and adapt the portrayals in the films and appropriate them to become part of their own life style. The responses indicated that only those acts deemed or perceived as useful and responsive to the current gender narrative of the respective communities were subjected to such debatable and negotiated process as they were converted to become part of the cultural practitioners' normal behaviour. Those that were deemed out of touch as the case of Sister Shade in *The pastor's Wife* were out-rightly rejected.

It must also be noted that there were some instances where the portrayals were so compelling that the audiences completely adopted such acts and they became part of their new perception or attitude to gender and social relations. For example, as shown in one of the extracts in the analysis section, a male audience may be inspired by a male character of the film, let us say, partaking in child care which most respondents stated that at first they perceived it as women's task but now as a result of their exposure to film they are convinced, from their own confession, it is also men's responsibility (see chapters 7 and 8).

However, it can be argued that the appropriation of Nollywood's representations is subject to practical challenges in the real Malawian context. It has been stated elsewhere in the thesis that many women are unemployed and are not in the formal

job sector. This makes it virtually impossible for men to share most of the household chores in equal terms and capacity as women.

Towards a negotiated concept of African gender

As this thesis conceptualises, Nollywood can be seen as a force to facilitate the continentalisation of African gender notion, although the issue of cultural diversity remains complicated and this is a source of debate among Afro-centric scholars. Chapter three of this thesis contains a detailed discussion of this concern. However, it could be contended that the diversity in culture that accompanies a contested notion of gender calls for a negotiated concept of African gender. Nnaemeka (2004) proposes ‘nego-feminism’ as opposed to African feminism when examining gender issues on the continent. Nnaemeka defines ‘nego-feminism’ as a negotiation of gender codes that would see the incorporation of African cultures’ perspectives in view of their differences and commonalities (ibid). She contends that nego-feminism will factor in the reality of the cultural divide between African societies and at the same time consider their shared values that can be used as an organising principle to explore female representation in African societies.

The nego-feminism approach attracts the attention of several African scholars such as Etounga-Manguelle (2000). He supports Nnaemeka’s proposition in arguing that “the number of subcultures [in Africa] is undeniable. But there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes, and institutions that bind together the nations south of the Sahara, and in many respects those of the north as well” (6). Others like Bakare-Yusuf (2004) go further in proposing the incorporation of a non-African notion of gender in response to the global culture that is influencing modern African gender

concepts. He thus claims that cultures in African societies are ever-evolving. He cautions against any attempt to play down the influence of Western gender notions, warning against the wholesale rejection of a Western notion of gender. He argues that the present African societies are a part of the global family (see chapter three). Such observation is evident in chapter 6 of the thesis in which the issue of subjectivity in culture and gender appears to have impacted or influenced audiences' reaction or interpretation of the female representation.

Nollywood as a potentially Pan-Africanist cultural institution in the continentalisation of African gender

The study has revealed how Nollywood films facilitate cultural products from Nigeria to the recipient country, Malawi. It has demonstrated how Nigerian cultural aspects such as language, dress and lifestyle are manifested among Malawian audiences (chapter 5). The study has revealed how Malawian audiences are adopting some aspects of Nigerian culture as exemplified in their use of Nigerian phrases or words; the Nigerian English or pidgin which is common in the films is spoken by some Malawian audiences albeit on a small scale for the time being. According to respondents, there is a claim that the emergence of Nollywood has influenced women to dress in a similar style to the actors in the films. This claim is backed by the behaviour of some audiences on the ground as shown in chapter 8 of the thesis.

Likewise, the question of gender, although contested, is another area where the films appear to have influenced the audiences. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have shown how female audiences are inspired by the heroine in the films. This acts as a catalyst for them to become inspired and change their mind-set and regard themselves as equal

in ability to their male counterparts. According to the study, male respondents in chapter seven indicated that the films educated them. They stated that by imitating the way actors relate to their female counterparts in the films, the male audiences gradually see it as fashionable to adopt this 'new way' of treating women. However, the study reveals that the Malawian audience did not imitate the cultural aspects or gender notions blindly. The study reveals that the audience appropriate the adopted cultural aspects in their own context which is fitting in their communities.

The above cultural adoption, adaptation and appropriation (chapter 7) suggests that Nollywood is a cultural institution in Africa and therefore acts as a vehicle of cultural flow from one African nation to another. In the end, based on the ability of Nollywood to connect African people through its films, I conceptualise Nollywood as a cultural institution that has the potential to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, culture, knowledge and technology between and amongst African states. In this way, Nollywood, conceptually, could be adopted for a political mission, to reconstitute Pan-Africanism as it harmonises the homogenised cultural and political aspects relevant to the African context. For the purpose of this study, gender balances between men and women may be a possible cultural by-product that would constitute the notion of the contemporary African gender that would ensure that both sexes have mutual respect towards each other.

In conclusion, based on the Malawi case study as discussed throughout this thesis, I therefore argue that Nollywood may be a new Pan-Africanist cultural phenomenon with a potential to facilitate the migration of social, cultural, economic and political

products within African states. Such movement is what this study has introduced and discussed as a theory of continentalisation (Omoniyi, 2014). Continentalisation is conceptually crucial in any Pan-Africanist initiative as it is an alternative theory to globalisation in an African context.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, continentalisation is conceptually a bottom-up approach which could facilitate the south-south intra-continental cultural flow within Africa. This is opposed to globalisation which critics argue is a top-bottom intercontinental cultural flow (ibid). The implication of continentalisation to this study is that it accords Nollywood films the exposure of various manifestations of gender and social relations across diverse African cultures. In the long run, this exposure could help to identify the dominant commonalities across the cultural elements depicted and so would propagate homogenised gender relations. Effectively, such homogenised gender elements could arguably be a product(s) of cultural negotiations and would have the basic elements that would identify it as African as opposed to non-African (see chapter 7).

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the study was carried out on a small sample of the population of Malawian Nollywood audiences. This paves the way for others to challenge the results of the study. Nevertheless, as I have argued earlier, the sample was representative of the Malawian population. However, future research could consider recruiting a larger sample that could cover other minority ethnic groups,

religious faiths and other micro-economic factors such as occupation and linguistic minorities.

Other than the above limitation, the study faced challenges in the literature regarding Nollywood and Malawi. There were further challenges in sourcing literature on film studies in Malawi. As indicated earlier on, there is no available literature on Nollywood in Malawi or information that provides the background for film or cinema in Malawi. Further to this, there is no available literature on film audiences in Malawi, not to mention Nollywood film audiences. Critically, the study faced the challenge of a model for analytical framework. The study adopted the dual approach to analyse data: film data and focus group data, and the available literature so far did not offer any case studies of a similar approach elsewhere. Most studies available either had a film based data analytical approach or audience based data analytical framework.

However, these challenges have turned out to be the strength of my thesis as it offers new knowledge and approach to the scholarship on Nollywood, audience studies and film studies in general. In its own way, the study also offers new knowledge on the contested issue of gender notions. Thus, the findings go a long way to link African gender relations and the role of Africa's largest film culture "Nollywood" in an attempt to define the African sense of gender notion (Amadiume, 1997; Ayewumi, 1987).

In a nutshell, the study has made an effort to theorise Nollywood as an agent of continentalising the notion of African gender which the study argues must be a

process which should be subjected to debate. The study has contended that this calls for intra-cultural and inter-cultural negotiations of gender concepts within and across the continent. Nollywood is therefore a forum to showcase these cultures through its cinematic portrayals of women's social relations with men. Thus, the film could be an agent of social change in constructing public perception of women that is free of any stereotype.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, as indicated earlier in this chapter, future research could consider a wider population sample for audiences. In addition, future audience research on Malawi could consider conducting separate studies involving all-male or all-female Nollywood audiences. Further research could also consider delimiting the audiences to generation or age brackets, for instance, young, middle-aged, and older audiences. Similar studies could be carried out among audiences sharing similar backgrounds across the country, for instance, education, race, faith, language and social economic status.

Secondly, future studies on Nollywood's impact on audiences in relation to social and gender relations could consider the representation of men in the films. Since gender relations are matters that involve men and women, it could be equally valuable to investigate the extent to which men are represented in the films as a way of assessing its impact or potential impact on their relations to women.

Thirdly, there have been difficulties whilst researching Nollywood (including this present study) in defining the concepts and other technical aspects of film such as

genre in the film's social, cultural and environmental context. Researching Nollywood has taught this study that many concepts and approaches borrowed from the mainstream Hollywood and Bollywood films have in most instances become irrelevant to apply in Nollywood studies. This is owing to the fact that Nollywood operates in a different context in terms of marketing, target audience, commercialisation, its audiences' appreciation of entertainment and film, just to mention a few. For this reason, therefore, in future, African universities including in Malawi could attempt to develop curricula that are relevant to Nollywood rather than the wholesale adoption of a Western approach to cinema or film studies.

Lastly, future research could consider involving the filmmakers, that is the directors or producers of Nollywood to ascertain whether some of the films that arguably portray women as heroines are made out of affirmative action or if it is a mere coincidence. The present study could not incorporate this as it was outside the scope of its primary focus, that is, audiences.

OVERALL VALUE OF THE THESIS AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Firstly and foremost, the study adds to the existing scholarship of Nollywood. As Nollywood is a relatively new film industry with unique challenges facing it, there have been concerns regarding insufficient literature on the industry. Critics have claimed that the scholarship on the industry has demonstrated insufficient evidence of critical research (Haynes, 2010).

Secondly, the study has filled the gaps identified in the existing scholarship on Nollywood and its reception. The existing audience or reception studies of Nollywood have been carried out in Europe, America and in the 'host' nation, Nigeria. In some of these studies, respondents are either Nigerian migrants or Nigerian diaspora. In some studies, the inquiry has centred on audiences that have some connections with Nigeria directly or indirectly. Some of the audiences either have ancestral connections with Nigeria or are in close contact (friends or relations) with Nigerian migrants or descents. This study therefore has taken a different category of audiences: Malawi. The audiences in focus in this study have no Nigerian connection and have no prior experience of Nigerian lifestyle. The fact that the audiences selected are the first non-Nigerian African communities appears to fill in the lacuna in the scholarship. This development is significant in the sense that it demonstrates the growth of Nollywood industry in Africa and underlines its place as the biggest film industry in Africa. It further underscores the extent to which Nollywood industry has become the undisputed premier cultural and entertainment institution in Africa.

Lastly, the study has contributed to new knowledge in Nollywood scholarship. As noted above, it is the first study ever conducted on Nollywood in Malawi. Added to this, it is the first study that has made an attempt to relate or situate Nollywood films and the present gender narratives in connection with the other in Malawi, an area that is contentious in contemporary Malawi. Furthermore, the study was conducted among an audience that has never been exposed to cinema (i.e. the physical, industrial space of cinema attendance) let alone any systematic film culture before.

Thus, the study has paved the way for examining how a village audience interpret and critique female representation in the films based on their gender narrative cultural frameworks, just as we might examine how an urban audience could use their global worldview experience, or a film scholar might apply their theoretical frameworks. For all these reasons, the study offers a milestone contribution to the field of Nollywood scholarship.

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

On a point of reflection, if I were to carry out the audience research again, I would do it differently in the following methodological approaches:

To begin with, I would involve male-male participants as my focus groups discussants. In such scenario, probably all-male group could be more flexible to express its independent views on the female representation without fears of being labelled or viewed as male chauvinists by fellow female participants. I could get a different outcome from the one I have in my present study.

Secondly, I would involve female-female participants as my discussants. Perhaps, in such scenario, women could be more open and flexible to share more personal stories relating to their experiences with the films. Also, maybe more females could be more forthcoming as they could not have the feeling of being eclipsed by male discussants especially in patrilineal communities where women are socially

constructed to be submissive to their male counterparts. I also could yield a different outcome from the current research.

Thirdly, I could involve participants of the same age irrespective of their locations, cultural, educational, cultural and religious affiliations. As noted in the discussion chapters, it is likely that some age groups were not comfortable to express their views in front of the younger or older age group. By categorising them on similar age bracket or generation could have made them feel comfortable to express their views on female representation without fear of being prejudiced by the younger or older members of the group. I could come up with a different result from the the present work.

Fourthly, I could involve people participanst from units of homogeneous social class and do a comparative analysis of their respective outcome. By grouping them in their perceived respective social group could make participants feel to express themselves without any feeling of being prejudiced by members belonging to a privileged or unprivileged social class. By comparing their responses, could have made the findings richer and well represented. I could end up with a different finding from the current work.

Lastly, I could involve the film-makers to hear their views regarding the question of female representation in the films they make. In such scenario, the study could establish whether the film-makers are motivated by mere commercial interest to come up with the story lines for mere entertainment or they have a political agenda

to advance the cause of women and films are a way serving educative ends or not. I could end up with a different outcome from the present research findings.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Participant Consent Forms

Chichewa Translation



ETHICS COMMITTEE

CHIKALATA CHOPEMPHA KUTENGA NAWO MBALI

MAGULU OKAMBIRANA

Okondeka Bambo kapena Mayi,

Ndalemba kalatayi mukupemphani kuti mutenge nawo mbali ku kafukufuku amene ndikupanga mdera lanu. Ndikufufuza za mmene a Malawi tingawiritsire ma filimu a ma Nigeria polimbana ndi khalidwe la nkhanza kwa amayi. Mukupemphedwa kuti mudzakhale nawo mugulu imene idzakambirane za nkhaniyi. Ma tepi a mafilimu a

ma Nigeria okwana anayi apatsidwa kwainu kuti muonere kuti choncho tidzathe kukambirana mounikira zimene ziri mumatepimo.

Ndalemba mutu wa kafukufuku wanga wa sukulu ya ukachenjede munsimu ndinso ndalemba mwatsane-tsatane za gawo limene ndikukupemphani kuti mutenge ndinso ufulu muli nawo mukavomereza pempho langa.

Mutu wa kafukufuku: *Kuwunikira chithunzithunzi cha amayi mu ma filimu aku Nigeria: Kodi ma filimuwa angakhale chida chogonjetsera bvuto la nkhanza kwa amayi?*

Chithunzithunzi cha ntchito ya kafukufukuyi:

Kafukufukuyi achitikira kuyambira mwezi wa May mpakana mwezi wa October chaka cha 2013. Cholinga cha kafukufukuyi nkufufuza ngati ma filimu aku Nigeria angathe kugwiritsidwa ntchito ngati chida chothetsera kapena kuchepetsa mchitidwe wa nkhanza kwa a Malawi.

Kafukufukuyi akuchitikira mmadero owerengeka m'Malawi muno koma mzigawo zonse. Abambo ndi amayi atha kutenga nawo mbali kuyambira zaka 18 mpakana 60.

Kafukufukuyi ali mzigawo zitatu. Gawo loyamba ndilofunsa ogulitsa matepi ndi owonetsa ma filimu zammene anthu akukondera ma filimu aku Nigeria wa. Gawo lachiwiri ndilokambirana ndi magulu angapo za maganizo awo pa nkhaniyi. Awatu adzidzakambirana za ma filimu anayi amene adzaperekedwa kwa iwo nkuwaonera kwa mwezi wathunthu pa filimu iliyonse. Kenako, pakutha kwa mwezi tidzakambirana zimene mwaonerazo mwatsatane tsatane pa nkhani yokhudza gawo

la amayi mmafilimu wa. Ndipo gawo lotsiriza lidzakhala younikira ngati ma filimuwa angathe kuthetsa nkhanza kwa amayi poonetsetsa ngati anthu akukopera kalankhulidwe ndi ka bvalidwe ka anthu a ku Nigeria.

Anthu pafupifupi 250 akuyembekezera kutenga mbali pa kafukufukuyi ndipo mzochitika zonse zizikhala mchilankhulo cha Chichewa.

Inu mukuyembekezereka kutenga nawo mbali monga mmodzi mwa anthu amene adzakhale nawo muzokambirana kuchokera ku mafilimu amene mwaonera. Inu monga mmodzi mwa anthu amene asonyeza chidwi kutenga nawo mbali mukuyembekezera kusindikiza dzina lanu ndi ku saina chidindo chanu musimu kusonyeza kuti mwamvetsa bwino lomwe zolinga za kafukufukuli ndipokuti mukadali ndi chidwi chotenga nawo mbali popanda kukakamizidwa. Koma ngati, pa zifukwa zokwanira kwainu mwaganiza zosatenga nawo mbali pantchitoyi cha mkati-kati mwa kafukufukuyi muli omasuka kutero opanda kukakamizidwa kupereka chifukwa pa chisankho chanu. Koma ngati mutero muyenera kudziwa kuti zomwe mwapereka kwa ofufuza zinkhoza kugwiritsidwa ntchito.

Ofufuza:

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Mawu opereka chilolezo:

Ine ndikuvomereza kutenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyi ndipo ndikudziwa kuti ndili ndi ufulu woturuka mkafukufukuyi opanda kupereka chifukwa cha chisankho changa. Ndikudziwanso kuti zonse zimene zingafotokozedwe pa kafukufukuyi zidzasungidwa mwa chinsinsi ndipo kuti dzina langa ndinso chithunzi zidzatetezedwa. Komanso ngati kuti zizindikiro zanga zitadzaululika, ndidzapemphedwa asanasindikize. Ndikudziwanso kuti sindiyenera kuwononga chuma kapena ndalama zanga pakutenga nawo mbali pa kafukufukuyi; motero, ngati ndingagwiritse ntchito ndalama yanga pamaulendo kapena pa chakudya ndili mkati

mwa kafukufukuyi, ndiyenera kudzabwezedwa ndalama zanga. Ndikudziwanso kuti ngati ndingaganize zotuluka mukafukufukuyi zonse zimene ndanena pamene ndimatenga nawo mbali zikhoza kugwiritsidwa ntchito ngati ofufuza aona kuti ndizofunikira koposa kuntchito yake.

Dzina

Chidindo:.....

Tsiku:.....

Chidziwitso: Ngati muli ndi mafunso kapena mufuna mudziwe zambiri zokhudza kafukufukuyi mukhoza kulemba kalata kapena kutchaya thenifolo kwa ondiyang'anira pa ntchitoyi kapena wa mkulu wa ku sukulu yanga pogwiritsa ntchito keyala ndi ma nambala amene asindikizidwa panso pa dzina ndi keyala yangayi:

Keyala la Mphunzitsi wa mkulu:

Dzina: Professor Tope Omoniyi

Keyala: Roehampton University, Richardson Building, Digby Stuart College,
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Keyala la Mkulu wa Gawo la sukulu:

Dzina: Dr. Paul Sutton

Keyala: Roehampton University, Richardson building, Digby Stuart College,
Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5PH

Email: P. Sutton@roehampton.ac.uk

Thenifolo:

ETHICS COMMITTEE

CHIKALATA CHOSONYEZA KUTENGA NAWO MBALI

MKHALA TCHERU

Okondeka Bambo kapena Mayi,

Ndalemba kalatayi mukupemphani kuti mutenge nawo mbali ku kafukufuku amene ndikupanga mdera lanu. Ndikufufuza za mmene a Malawi tingawiritsire ma filimu a ma Nigeria polimbana ndi khalidwe la nkhanza kwa amayi. Mukupemphedwa kuti mutenge nawo mbali pakuvomereza kuti mudzakhala ololela kuunikidwa muzochita zanu kwa nthawi ili yoonse pa miyezi isanu ndi imodzi monga gawo imodzi lofunikira mu kafukufuku wanga. Chachikulu kafukufuku wanga akufuna kuunikira ngati kuoena ma filimuwa kwapangitsa kuti anthu akopere timakhalidwe tina tamene anthu aku Nigeria machita mumoyo wawao wa tsiku nid tsiku.

Ndalemba mutu wa kafukufuku wanga wa sukulu ya ukachenjede munsimu ndinso ndalemba mwatsane-tsatane za gawo limene ndikukupemphani kuti mutenge ndinso ufulu muli nawo mukavomereza pempho langa.

Mutu wa kafukufuku: *Kuwunikira chithunzithunzi cha amayi mu ma filimu aku Nigeria: Kodi ma filimuwa angakhale chida chogonjetsera bvuto la nkhanza kwa amayi?*

Chithunzithunzi cha ntchito ya kafukufukuyi:

Kafukufukuyi achitikira kuyambira mwezi wa May mpakana mwezi wa October chaka cha 2013. Cholinga cha kafukufukuyi nkufufuza ngati ma filimu aku Nigeria angathe kugwiritsidwa ntchito ngati chida chothetsera kapena kuchepetsa mchitidwe wa nkhanza kwa a Malawi.

Kafukufukuyi akuchitikira mmadero owerengeka m'Malawi muno koma mzigawo zonse. Abambo ndi amayi atha kutenga nawo mbali kuyambira zaka 18 mpakana 60.

Kafukufukuyi ali mzigawo zitatu. Gawo loyamba ndilofunsa ogulitsa matepi ndi owonetsa ma filimu zammene anthu akukondera ma filimu aku Nigeria wa. Gawo lachiwiri ndilokambirana ndi magulu angapo za maganizo awo pa nkhaniyi. Awatu adzidzakambirana za ma filimu anayi amene adzaperekedwa kwa iwo nkuwaonera kwa mwezi wathunthu pa filimu iliyonse. Kenako, pakutha kwa mwezi tidzakambirana zimene mwaonerazo mwatsatane tsatane pa nkhani yokhudza gawo la amayi mmafilimu wa. Ndipo gawo lotsiriza lidzakhala younikira ngati ma filimuwa angathe kuthetsa nkhanza kwa amayi poonetsetsa ngati anthu akukopera kalankhulidwe ndi ka bvalidwe ka anthu a ku Nigeria.

Anthu pafupifupi 250 akuyembekezera kutenga mbali pa kafukufukuyi ndipo mzochitika zonse zizikhala mchilankhulo cha Chichewa.

Inu mukuyembekezereka kutenga nawo mbali monga mmodzi mwa anthu amene ndingadzawatsate nzochita zawo pa miyezi isanu ndi imodzi opanda kulankhulana nawo. Inu monga mmodzi mwa anthu amene asonyeza chidwi kutenga nawo mbali mukuyembekezera kusindikiza dzina lanu ndi ku saina chidindo chanu musimu kusonyeza kuti mwamvetsa bwino lomwe zolinga za kafukufukuli ndipokuti mukadali ndi chidwi chotenga nawo mbali popanda kukakamizidwa. Koma ngati, pa zifukwa zokwanira kwainu mwaganiza zosatenga nawo mbali pantchitoyi cha mkatikati mwa kafukufukuyi muli omasuka kutero opanda kukakamizidwa kupereka chifukwa pa chisankho chanu. Koma ngati mutero muyenera kudziwa kuti zomwe mwapereka kwa ofufuza zinkhoza kugwiritsidwa ntchito.

Ofufuza:

Dzina: JOSEPH CHIMBUTO

Gawo la sukulu: Media, Culture & Language

Keyala ya sukulu ya ukachenjede: Roehampton University, Richardson Building,
Digby Stuart College, Roehampton Lane, London.

Postcode: SW15 5PH

Email: chimbutj@roehampton.ac.uk

Thenifolo: +44 7553537293

Mawu opereka chilolezo:

Ine ndikuvomereza kutenga nawo gawo ku kafukufukuyi ndipo ndikudziwa kuti ndili ndi ufulu woturuka mkafukufukuyi opanda kupereka chifukwa cha chisankho changa. Ndikudziwanso kuti zonse zimene zingafotokozedwe pa kafukufukuyi zidasungidwa mwa chinsinsi ndipo kuti dzina langa ndinso chithunzi zidzatetezedwa. Komanso ngati kuti zizindikiro zanga zitadzaululika, ndidzapemphedwa asanasindikize. Ndikudziwanso kuti sindiyenera kuwononga chuma kapena ndalama zanga pakutenga nawo mbali pa kafukufukuyi; motero, ngati ndingagwiritse ntchito ndalama yanga pamaulendo kapena pa chakudya ndili mkati mwa kafukufukuyi, ndiyenera kudzabwezedwa ndalama zanga. Ndikudziwanso kuti ngati ndingaganize zotuluka mukafukufukuyi zonse zimene ndanena pamene ndimatenga nawo mbali zikhoza kugwiritsidwa ntchito ngati ofufuza aona kuti ndizofunikira koposa kuntchito yake.

Dzina

Chidindo:.....

Tsiku:.....

Chidziwitso: Ngati muli ndi mafunso kapena mufuna mudziwe zambiri zokhudza kafukufukuyi mukhoza kulemba kalata kapena kutchaya thenifolo kwa ondiyang'anira pa ntchitoyi kapena wa mkulu wa ku sukulu yanga pogwiritsa ntchito keyala ndi ma nambala amene asindikizidwa panso pa dzina ndi keyala yangayi:

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Dear Sir or Madam

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN MY FIELD RESEARCH

The above subject matter refers. I am a second year research student at Roehampton University pursuing my doctoral studies in Media, Culture and Language studies. I am currently conducting a field study to collect data for my PhD thesis. I request your participation as one of my focus group discussants in the process of gathering data for my research. Critical at this level of my investigation is to establish whether Nollywood films have in any way influenced people's behaviour, attitude or life style or not. I am painfully aware the likelihood of discomfort this may subject to in

sharing some of your personal feelings, beliefs and opinions on issues of gender relations before fellow discussants. However, be assured that any information to be discussed will be held with confidentiality.

Below is the title of the research project followed by a detailed description of the project.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Title of Research Project: *The Portrayal of a woman in Nollywood: An investigation on the film's potential to address gender imbalance in Malawi*

Brief Description of Research Project:

The study intends to investigate on the potential of Nollywood films (as the Nigerian motion picture industry is widely called) to address the problem of gender imbalance in Malawi. Studies and personal experiences have informed that women in Malawi are being subjected to various abuses in homes, workplaces and public institutions. The field project will be conducted in Malawi, a southern African country with a population of about 15 million people according to the 2008 Housing and Population Census. The project will involve both male and female participants totalling to between 150 and 250 in different categories.

This study therefore requires you to participate in one of the series of focus group discussions. The participants will be aged 18 and above, and will be drawn across the country irrespective of their educational, economic, cultural and social background. The field work is expected to commence in May, 2013 and winds up in October, 2013. This exercise will be carried within a six-month period as projected above.

You will be audio and video recorded alongside your fellow participants. Before the session, Free and Prior Informed Consent will be pursued from you in writing only. In case you cannot read and write, you will be supported in the process. You are going to sign and date two of these forms. You will return one and keep one.

As the researcher will be expected to video and audio record some of aspects of data collection on you, your written consent only will be sought. In case you can't read and write, you will be supported in the process. However, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable to be either audio or video recorded or both, you will be free to decline without being required to give a reason for this.

As the data gathered may be used for other areas of study in future other than the current one, only written consent will be required. If you cannot read and write, you will be supported in the process. Where consent is not given, you will not be forced to take part in the project.

Before the actual exercise of data collection, you will be given a written debriefing write-up in advance on the project's aim and objectives. Any expense likely to be

incurred by you in the process in forms of transport and food expenses will be reimbursed by this researcher.

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: JOSEPH CHIMBUTO

Department: Media, Culture & Language

University address: Roehampton University, Richardson Building, Digby Stuart College, Roehampton Lane, London.

Postcode: SW15 5PH

Email: chimbutj@roehampton.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 7553537293

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings unless I have consented to have my identification unveiled prior to this action. I understand that should the investigator find it necessary to disclose my identity in any form; he shall seek my permission prior to such action.

I agree to have the data (audio and video) collected from me to be used for the purpose of this study. I further agree to have the said data used for other areas of study other than the current one in future. I understand the investigator will seek my consent whenever he feels like identifying me in his publication. I understand that consent will be sought whenever he requires publishing my identification in future.

I understand that any cost I may incur in the course of my participation to the investigation in terms of transport and food expenses; I shall be duly reimbursed by the investigator. I further understand that I reserve the right to withdraw my participation by indicating my decision to the investigator or his representative verbally or in written form at any time but without necessarily being required to give a reason for such action. In the event of withdrawal, I agree to have the aggregated data collected from me to be used or published for the purpose of this study should the investigator finds it necessary to doing so.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Name: Professor Tope Omoniyi

University Address: Roehampton University, Richardson Building, Digby Stuart
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Email: T. Omoniyi@roehampton.ac.uk

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Head of Department Contact Details:

Name: Dr. Paul Sutton

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Telephone: +44 20 8392 3870

APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the focus group discussions, although they were not posed to participants in this explicit form:

- What films are you familiar with and discuss how often do you watch them per day, week and in a month?
- What factors do you believe account for Nollywood's emergence as a popular film industry among the local Malawian audiences in the last ten years?
- To what extent do you believe Nollywood films facilitate the flow of cultures from Nigeria to Malawi?
- Based on the films you have so far watched, in particular reference to the six case study film you have recently watched, how are women represented in the films in terms of their social relations with men in these films?
- To what extent do Nollywood films' representation of women characters serve as a model to Malawian audiences?
- Taking into account that Nollywood is an agent of crossborder cultural flow on the continent, to what extent does the films offer an opportunity for the identification of African gender notions across the continent's national cultures?

APPENDIX 3: A SUMMARY OF PROCESSED DATA

TRANSCRIPT FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

MABULABO FOCUS GROUP

The discussions took place in three separate days: Friday, 19th July, 2013, Saturday, 24th August, 2013 and Saturday, 7th September, 2013. This group was comprised of nine participants: five males and four females. The group was located in the northern region of Malawi in Mzimba district. All the participants belonged to one ethnic group, Ngoni and, hence shared the same language and culture. The discussions were conducted in Chichewa, although some participants code-switched between Chichewa and Tumbuka (the area's local language). The discussions lasted between 75 minutes and 100 minutes in each meeting.

The participants' age ranged from 26 to 58 years old. Culturally, the area is a predominant patrilineal community and the local population to which the participants belonged practices highly patriarchal customs and traditions. The participants were all from a rural background and peasant farming was their chief occupation although a few engaged in some small scale business initiatives. Overall educational level of the participants was low: three members never attended school,

five members were primary school leavers and only one member was a junior secondary school (High School) leaver.

Response One

IN: 10:27:09:04....the actors and actresses look like us in most respects. Though they do not speak in our mother tongues, the gestures and storylines are crafted in a way that some of us who do not speak and understand English.....

OUT: 10: 28:59:17... can easily follow the films' stories. **(Friday, 19th July, 2013)**

Response Two

IN: 14:34:00 No matter how rich and powerful one is, you need to have a sense of belonging in one way or another. Either you belong to others or others belong to you. Whatever the case, one both belongs to others and others belong to him or her.....

Out: 14:35:19: 01...For us, there is no substitute. **(Friday, 19th July, 2013)**

Response Three

IN: 15:10:33:19...The habit of putting on revealing clothes such as mini-skirts, tight see-through skirts, tight trousers, and short blouses eroded the integrity and respect of an African woman because they exposed the nakedness of the woman. The putting on such revealing attire as female as seen in some if not most female actors dilutes a sense of modesty and simplicity.

OUT: 15:11:17: 29... associated with a typical African woman. (**Friday, 19th July, 2013**)

Response Four

IN: 15: 45: 37: 01...Just two years ago, when we lost most of our cattle due to foot and mouth disease, I asked my wife and our two boys to leave home at the middle of the night and go to the bush under a tree splashing flours around and asking our forefathers to forgive us and cast the spell out from our cattle kraal. I mentioned names of my father's fathers and my wife too mentioned names of her father's fathers. We invoked the spirits of the departed parents and close relations to have mercy on us and fight the evil that was tormenting our family.

OUT: 15:48: 00: 03...We depend on livestock for our livelihood. (**Friday, 19th July, 2013**)

Response Five

IN: 09:51:22:19 We learn how lovers who come from poor and rich backgrounds respectively overcome resistance of their parents on their way to get marriage. This instilled in us a sense of optimism towards life. The romantic Nigerian films teach us strategies for pleasing husbands in order to strengthen our relationships. Nigerian films deepened our faith in God. In some films forces of evil contend superior command against God's spirit. We always watch that in the end our God emerging triumphant.

OUT: 09:54: 00:38.....Also, Nigerian films are easy to follow because their cultural practices to a large extent resemble Malawian cultural practices e. g. witchcraft.

(Saturday, 24th August, 2013)

Response Six

IN: 09:58: 11: 13...We learn a lot of lessons. Some films teach us not to love for money. You watch a woman abandoning a poor husband for a richer man only to regret later after the poor husband has become rich. We watch many parents arrange marriages for their children because they want them to marry rich spouses only to regret later after realising that either the marriage did not last or the poor boy or girl that they had refused their children to marry have turned out to be very rich. These are the realities of our communities and we draw a lot of lessons...

OUT: 10: 01: 52: 44...out of watching these films. **(24th August, 2013)**

Response Seven

IN: 10:31:01:01.... Outspoken women in the Nollywood films misrepresent an African woman because they depict an African woman as talkative...attracting societal disapproval because an ideal African woman is expected to be submissive, loyal and obedient in society. Women are portrayed as property of men rather than human beings equal in status to men. For example, in some films we note it is not uncommon to hear clan leaders calling a wife to their son “Our wife.” In contrast, I haven’t heard women calling possessively “Our husband” a husband to the daughter

of their clan. It tells us one thing: collective entitlement to women loyalty whereby a woman is not only married to their husband...

OUT: 10:33:21:07...but also to the rest of the members of the husband's clan. (24th August, 2013)

Response Eight

IN: 11:21:00 The message I get in the film is that urban life is the best life to aspire for and village life is the worst. As villagers it makes us pity ourselves because there is nothing the film shows that is positive about our way of life. It makes us feel like backward people and therefore condemned. We can't all be in town and behave as universally expected. We have our own practices and customs that define us. Those in cities know their roots are here in the village and they do respect that. But the film appears

OUT: 11:22: 35: 17.....to make fun of us. .. (Saturday, 24th August, 2013)

Response Nine

31) **IN: 10: 12:08:04** The Pastor fails to control his wife. He can't be there enough for her to satisfy her love needs at the pretext of church commitment. In the end his care free attitude and approach backfire as the scandals of the wife costs his job and career. He is back to square zero. He resorts to smoking and drinking in public out of frustration. He loses his wife and his job.

OUT: 10: 13: 19:01.....Can this make a good example to us men, I am sure not.
(Saturday, 7th September, 2013).

Response Ten

IN: 10:33: 17: 13...In the absence of the king due to illness, the wife, who is the Queen Mother, is in control. She demonstrates good leadership skills and everybody in the royal household including the sons complies with her decisions. She is cool-headed and takes no sides and this wins her the support and respect of everyone in the household. The same is also shown in the character of the prince's wife. She gives counsel to the husband and is strong enough to persuade him to exercise restraint as he is naturally a short-tempered man. With the wife, he is now a changed person. The wife further wins the respect of the rest of the royal household due to her sound leadership and strength....

OUT: 11:00: 03: 47... in helping the new king direct the affairs of the family as well as of the kingdom. **(Saturday, 7th September, 2013)**

Response Eleven

IN: 11: 05: 13: 01...In some cases women are presented as important members of the society. For example, village women are often depicted as caring for their husbands. They are also depicted as true custodians of African culture through their dressing, and the respect they give to men and their husbands in the Nigerian movies. In our common understanding: submission, loyalty and obedience to men should not be regarded as weaknesses...

OUT: 11:07:01:18... rather they should be viewed as strengths of an African woman. (7th September, 2013)

Response Twelve

IN: 11: 19: 22: 49....Ada demonstrates to us that she does not take nonsense from men who abuse their wives in Not With My Daughter. In The Comforter we see the girl standing firm in her conviction and faith in God and she does good will to save life despite being betrayed by the woman she is trying to save from death. We also see how the princess turned queen persevered and endured her barren situation in The Royal Fight. She remains strong and steadfast with optimism despite the public ridicule she sometimes is subjected to by her detractor in the royal household. In Mr& Mrs we witness another woman in Susan as role model who despite being sidelined and disowned by her husband's people including her husband she fights her way back and earns the love and respect of her husband and her father in-law. We need more of such characters in our communities.....

OUT: 11:23: 30: 51... for the good of the families and communities at large. (Saturday, 7th September, 2013)

MZIMBA FOCUS GROUP

There were a total of ten participants in this group: seven females and three males. They came from different educational and social backgrounds. Some were from low income families and others from medium income families. The group was composed

of retired teacher (1), serving teachers (2), social workers (2), police officer (1), church workers (2), secondary school pupil (1) and housewife (1). The discussions lasted between 90 minutes and 110 minutes in each meeting. We had three meetings: Saturday, 20th July, 2013; Sunday, 25th August, 2013 and Sunday, 8th September, 2013. Age range across the participants was 19 -65 years.

The participants belonged to a semi-urban community which is predominantly patrilineal. Like Malubalo, the community is located in the northern region of Malawi and it is at the heart of the district headquarters commonly known as the 'Mboma'. All participants belonged to one ethnic group, the Ngoni and speak Tumbuka language. As the case with Malubalo, the participants contributed in Chichewa but sometimes they could code-switch between Chichewa and Tumbuka languages. The community is highly patriarchal.

Respondent one

IN: 12: 31: 09:01 Watching the films, it occurs to me that we Malawians share a lot in common with the Nigerians in terms of our culture. We follow the similar customs on marriage such as bride-price and we share the same belief in the extended family arrangements. We Malawians believe in the existence of witchcraft and we blame someone whenever illness, death or curse strikes anyone of us in the family. I see the Nigerian films dramatising the same. *Juju* is now common in most of the videos we watch. Just like us, the films confirm the contrasting reality of our lives: the belief in *Juju* is combined or in parallel with the belief in God. Women use juju to win back lost love. Men use juju to get a job or promotion or riches in our

communities. In the Nigerian films it is common. You can't finish watching a film without any part portraying this aspect of *juju* then

OUT: 12: 33: 50: 59.....that is not a Nigerian film. (**Saturday, 20th July, 2013**)

Respondent Two

IN: 13: 15: 47: 03..... The main reason for my liking of the traditional (cultural) movies is that parents had been brought up in the village where life revolves around traditional rituals, believes, and practices. We therefore watch Nigerian traditional films because Nigerian films portrayed an African culture which resembled Malawian traditions. Like wedding ceremonies, engagement ceremonies, and chief installation ceremonies....

OUT: 13:17:34:49.... as being compatible....(**Saturday, 20 July, 2013**)

Respondent three

IN: 13: 19: 21: 00 When one enters into a family as a wife you know what you have to do and Susan knew her duties and responsibilities well. We cook for our husband and do the laundry for them and even prepare bathing water for them. This does not imply we are slaves or servants to them but we are simply fulfilling are expected as our roles in the family. They too have their own roles to fulfil in the family which we expect them...

OUT: 13: 21: 00: 37.... to perform as husbands. (**Saturday, 20th July, 2013**)

Respondent Four

IN: 13: 26: 40: 09...Is that gender equality? I say no. You can't spend all the time at home and not even do the washing for your husband. A house girl can't do everything for you as a wife. Instead of talking about balancing power relations then it becomes power imbalance and the man is being a victim here. The fact that he is not employed should not make him less important at all. No wonder the house girl takes all the responsibilities...

OUT: 13: 28: 01: 26...even sleeping with the man. (Saturday, 20th July, 2013)

Respondent five

IN: 13:30: 41: 07 Ken divorces his wife and the reason he gives according to this film is that the wife is coming from an unknown poor family background while he comes from a very rich and affluent family. This is common when it is the wife and rarely when it is a man who has a poor background. Look, even Ken's mother cannot respect her daughter-in-law despite all her efforts to make a good wife. This is occurring to us in our extended families. The girl coming from poor parents is treated as an outcast by her in-laws...

OUT: 13: 33:16: 07... in the husband's compound. (Saturday, 20th July, 2013)

Respondent Six

IN: 13: 37: 25: 17... Look at the films in *The Royal Fight*, *Mr & Mrs.* and *The Comforter*. Much as there is an African aspect of the show, the other side of it shows

off some sort of richness. Look at the buildings, the furniture in the houses, the fancy cars used, the parties taking place and how people get excited with anything to do with money. Maybe this portrays the place of material wealth in Nigerian society and the extent their life is controlled by it. We are a humble people. Though money is important, we normally do not go to such extremes of placing it above everything in our life as...

13:40:23: 55... these Nigerian films show us. (**Saturday, 20th July, 2013**)

Respondent Seven

IN: 15:00:17: 23 The way Sister Shade behaves is not African at all. We Malawian women do not behave like that. I do not think Nigerian women behave like that either. It is foreign. She is too liberal and too independent to be a wife let alone the pastor's wife. Drinking in public, wearing revealing clothes and attempting to instigate fellow women in the church to revolt against men does not give a good account of a woman as far as we are concerned here. The same can be said of the friend of Susan. She spends most of her energy and time on her work, in the process neglecting her duties as a wife. Her career and success at work is all she cares about. Now the husband is tired and starts sleeping with a housemaid. She ought to balance family and work. Both matter a lot and if it were me the family comes first. That's our Malawian or African way of dealing with these two worlds:

OUT: 15: 19: 41: 34.....work and a family. (**Sunday, 25th August, 2013**)

Response Eight

IN: 16: 51: 23: 11 Look at those women, look at their faces, their colour, their smiles, the songs they sing, the dances they dance, everything like us Malawians but they are Nigerian women. I see in them my mother, my grandmother, my aunt, my daughter and my nieces. They go to the well to fetch water, go to the gardens, sell vegetables along the streets, fetch firewood in the bush with a baby on their back. All that I and my fellow women do here is being replicated in these films. The desire for a husband, love betrayals, gossiping and loyalty to a man are what best describe us here and I see the same in these films.

OUT: 16: 54: 00: 11...Africa is the same far and near.....(**Saturday, 25th August, 2013**)

Response Nine

IN: 15: 11: 44: 59 We watch Nigerian movies for entertainment, as the Malawi television cannot suffice our entertainment needs. We like watching both romantic (love) films and traditional movies. Some of the movie titles we have watched recently before this interview included the following; I Need a Man, My Love, Separated Kingdom, Kingdom on Fire, Cat and Rat, The Pope must Hear this, and Billionaires' Club. Actors/resses of their choice included.....

OUT: 15: 13: 09: 52.... Genevivi Nnaji, Mr. Ibu, and Patience Ozokwor. (**Sunday, 8th September, 2013**)

Response Ten

Watching girls like me contracting HIV/Aids is so worrying. This is due to the fact that many of us today we are losing our heads for money. We all need money yes and we all need jobs yes. But should we get them at all costs? We can do better and we can learn to resist. When watching some films and how the seemingly posh life out of prostitution turns out ugly when struck by the diseases and abandonment we have enough reasons to keep ourselves safe from the lures of rich old men who use their money to sexually exploit us. **(8th September, 2013)**

Response Eleven

I am moved by the way the Queen organises and manages the royal household plus the entire kingdom in the absence of her dying husband, the king. She defuses tensions in the house among the members of the royal family. Her daughter-in-law too is following her foot-steps. She provides sound leadership advice to her husband, the young king. She is available to everybody in the family and provides help and passionate advice to whoever is facing emotional problems among the royal household member. **(Sunday, 8th September)**

Response Twelve

It is these women who join forces with the chief of staff in the president's office to campaign against corrupt and greedy politicians. It is these women who use their numbers in the National Assembly to influence other members within the House to vote against the purported impeachment of the president which is being engineered

by disgruntled senior politicians who are frustrated by his anti-graft drive. We need more of these women in our Malawi today. (**Sunday, 8th September**)

Response Thirteen

IN: 15: 05: 00: 09 We like romantic Nollywood movies because we learn two key lessons. For instance, love movies teach us as parents the disadvantages of arranged marriages whereby parents choose a marriage partner for their children. This practice seems to have lost popularity in the contemporary era in which everybody has the right to choose a marriage themselves. Love should supersede greed for material wealth. For example, there is this movie in which a woman abandoned her poor husband only to regret later after the poor husband...

OUT: 15: 08: 22: 38.... had become rich (**Sunday, 8th September, 2013**)

KANENGO FOCUS GROUP

The group comprised of five members and all were males. The meetings took place on 21st July, 2013 (Sunday), 26th August, 2013 (Sunday) and 9th September, 2013 (Monday). The age range was 22-41 years old. Discussions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes in all meetings. This was urban-based focus group located in Malawi's capital, Lilongwe. Members belonged to different ethnic backgrounds and the discussions were all conducted in Chichewa. Overall, members possessed above minimum educational qualifications, the least educated was a secondary school (High School) certificate holder and the highest educated held a college diploma.

Response One

IN: 17: 09: 06: 29...The absence of strict regulation to enforce the age-limit of the movies. The proliferation of public video centres reduces the potential and the extent to which Nigerian films can be used as an instrument for upgrading the social, economic...

OUT: 17: 11: 32: 36... and political status of women in Malawi. (**Sunday, 21st July, 2013**)

Response Two

IN: 18: 10: 13; 27 Initially (in late 1990s when the women started watching Nigerian films) women's presentation in the Nollywood films was generally good and that it was in line the convention of African cultures. For example, in terms of dressing, women exercised modesty and simplicity as the costume they put on covered almost the whole body, leaving out parts of the body which are not considered as part of nakedness such as the arms, the lower parts of the legs and the face. Further to that, the dress was loose enough to hide the shape of the women. In addition, some scenes which depict sexual activities (e.g. couples kissing, having sexual intercourse, caressing and hugging) were not shown in the Nigerian films. In a way, therefore, an African woman was presented in Nigerian movies with dignity and respect. However, the presentation and representation of women in the Nigerian films tended to undermine the dignity, humanity, and respect of African women. For instance observed some Nigerian films explicitly show women in labour (delivering a child). This is not in line with African culture which has always treated a woman's

labour with the highest level privacy and confidentiality. The display of labour eroded the dignity of an African woman because it exposed the nakedness the women who, in the course of giving birth must contend with “the pain associated with labour on one hand, and the resulting public shame which come as a result of display of the labour scene in the Nollywood films....

OUT: 18: 17: 22: 01..... on the other hand. (**Sunday, 21st July, 2013**)

Response Three

IN: 18: 19: 00: 51 Women’s dressing in Nigerian movies undermined an African woman in two ways. First, the mini-skirts, tight trousers, short blouses and tight see-through clothes expose women’s sensitive parts such as the navel (*Mchombo*), thighs (*Ntchafu*), buttocks (*Mbina*) and hence her nakedness. In this regard, women risk being viewed by the society at large as sexual materials rather than as human beings who, like their male counterparts, have needs which must be satisfied. Secondly, the dressing and conduct of some women in the Nollywood movies portrayed women as prostitutes who cannot survive if they do not engage in sexual intercourse with many men. Unlike in the past, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to be watching some Nigerian movie together with our children because we are afraid of losing our respect, and that we do not want the movies...

OUT: 18:26: 01: 30... to spoil the morality of our kids. (**Sunday, 21st July, 2013**)

Response Four

IN: 18: 28: 10: 11...most of the films are out of touch.

OUT: 18:28: 20: 13...I find most of them too fictitious to suggest any relevance to our real life issues... **(Sunday, 21st July, 2013)**

Response Five

IN: 18: 40: 22: 31 I have no problem with women spending much of their time building their careers like a friend to Susan does in *Mr & Mrs*. But wearing revealing clothes as in the case of Sister Shade in *The Pastor's Wife* is unacceptable and uncharacteristic of Malawian standards. Unfortunately it is generating into a new fashion among the young women today but this is not Europe. This is not America. We are in Africa. We cannot copy some of these things here blindly like that.

OUT: 18: 43: 31: 00...Our women have to be mindful of this. **(Sunday, 21st July, 2013)**

Response Six

IN: 19: 20: 08: 01...As a man, you cannot ask for more in Susan...she is everything that defines a true African woman.

OUT: 19: 20: 41: 00.. ...without doubt any sane man would love her to be his dream wife. **(Sunday, 21st July, 2013)**

Response Seven

IN: 19: 37: 10: 05 Politics is a dirty game everywhere. These politicians are the same everywhere. They cannot be trusted. They are crooks, whether in Nigeria and in Malawi. Every film I watch on politics confirms the same belief among us.

Including this one we are watching now. These politicians of ours are really ruthless people.

OUT: 19: 39: 09: 06.... Is it an African problem....

Response Eight

IN: 19: 57: 01: 09 Whatever the mess took place in the government, corruption and all sorts of organised killings is at the end sanctified and life changes for the better of humanity in the end. It is a moral lesson to leaders on the roles and responsibilities they have and they better...

OUT: 19: 59: 10: 17... emulate this example. (**Sunday, 21st, 2013**)

Response Nine

IN: 19: 37: 10: 05 Politics is a dirty game everywhere. These politicians are the same everywhere. They cannot be trusted. They are crooks, whether in Nigeria and in Malawi. Every film I watch on politics confirms the same belief among us. Including this one we are watching now. These politicians of ours are really ruthless people. Is it a worldwide problem.....

OUT: 19:38: 51:58... or our African problem? (**Sunday, 21st July, 2013**)

Response Ten

IN: 17: 15: 27:13 Previously we used to have lowly educated people to evangelise but we see in the film *The Pastor's Wife*, Pastor James was a well-trained graduate of one of American's colleges. Other television channels show the similar trend. We

talk of Pastor Chris, T.B. Joshua as having a great influence in the way local pastors here approach their evangelism. Churches in Malawi especially evangelicals have adopted the same.

OUT: 17: 18: 00: 01...The pastors are apparently college graduate. (**Sunday, 26th August, 2013**)

Response Eleven

IN: 17:31: 59:06 I have no issue with my wife or daughter dressing how they wish. In fact most of them enjoy so-called revealing clothes. Some of us men too, if we are honest, feel good seeing women in revealing clothes. In pubs and at workplaces our eyes are glued to women dressing liberally and I do not understand why it should be a problem seeing our wives at home in the same way.

OUT: 17: 34: 21: 05...Let us face up to it please. (**Monday, 9th September, 2013**)

Response Twelve

Here is a young man in the presidency. He does not follow the bandwagon of fellow politicians who ascends into top leadership to abuse power and accumulate riches unscrupulously. He fights his colleagues head on and helps to rid the nation of corrupt officials and politicians. He risks his position and faces impeachment but he survives. (**Monday, 9th September**)

Response Thirteen

He makes little protest when ordered by parents to dump his girlfriend. He would have made independent analysis before emotionally executing what his parents fed him. In the end he regrets upon knowing the truth of the matter and he wants to commit suicide. What for? He is a weak character. (**Monday, 9th September**)

Response Fourteen

I have learned how to manage and resolve conflicts in my family. My wife and I come from different social and cultural backgrounds and this was a source of conflict as we had so much issues going the opposite way between us. We had to fight over petty issues. I now know how to handle her volatile temper and I show her that I do care about her. She appreciates my effort. (**Monday, 9th September**)

Response Fifteen

Whatever blunders he did are things of the past. This man has swallowed his pride and begs his wife to take him back. He realises he was wrong and accepts the responsibility. How many of us would go down our knees seeking forgiveness from our women whenever we wrong them as our fellow man has shown here? Most of us men never learn to ask forgiveness from our women. He does it in earnest and at the end he restores peace and love with the wife. (**Monday, 9th September**)

Response Sixteen

Ken is easily influenced by his mother. The mother tells him to divorce the wife and he does that. The mother tells him to get another woman and he does that. He gives silly reasons for divorcing the wife. He is abusive to her and treats her like a housemaid. He only goes back to her after noticing that she now looks much better than when they were together. In fact he is driven by jealous of seeing the wife getting another man. **(Monday, 9th September)**

Response Seventeen

In *The Comforter*, the girl did all the good work that warrants her as a heroine. One wonders why ending up killing herself? Is it a sign of admitting wrong doing? But the film vindicates her already by showing to us that she did not kill Henry's cousin deliberately, she was only defending herself from being raped. It leaves us directionless really. The same is the case with *Not With My Daughter*, in my view, Ada is supposed to be the heroine by standing to her right against abuses in her husband's family home but look what happened at the end, she and her sister ended up messing up everything when they fought Hussein who ended up being killed in the process. This is confusing. **(Monday, 9th September)**

LILONGWE FOCUS GROUP

This was an urban based group comprised of nine participants: six females and three males. Three meetings took place and each lasted between 90 minutes and 110

minutes. The age range was 20-24 years. All participants except two still attended school. Two were working class middle income and the rest were dependents to middle income working class families. The highest educated among them was a college degree holder (1), five were High School (Secondary School) pupils, two were undergraduate college students and one was a police officer. The meetings took place on the following dates: Monday, 22nd July, 2013; Tuesday, 27th August, 2013 and Tuesday, 10th September, 2013.

Response One

IN: 13: 11: 21: 00 I feel something is missing really. What value does it bring to me to watch people fighting or robot like people destroying buildings? It all sounds astronomical to most of us.

OUT: 13: 12: 30: 41... and out of sort. (**Monday, 22nd July, 2013**)

Response Two

IN: 13: 15: 00: 53 Nigerian pastors are shown in the videos wearing designer suits and use high tech on the pulpit. Malawian pastors used to care less about how they dress before Nollywood came on the market but hey have now turned to gloom themselves for the stage. This is attractive...

OUT: 13: 17: 03: 07... and changes the whole concept of worship. (**Monday, 22nd July, 2013**)

Response Three

IN: 15: 11: 23: 41 ...as far as we are concerned, God never prescribed to us what or what not to wear as a female. In the same way God never prescribed to us what we can do and not do as women. Sister Shade is doing a good job sensitizing fellow women to realise their rights and claim them. The church has been men's show and women are used as supporting roles. She even tells them that they too can become church ministers too.

OUT: 15: 13: 00: 51.....Isn't this inspiring enough? (**Monday, 22nd July, 2013**)

Response Four

IN: 15: 27: 13: 51 At first, an African woman was presented in Nigerian movies with dignity and respect.

However, overtime, as the women noted the presentation and representation of women in the Nigerian films tended to undermine the dignity, humanity..

OUT: 15: 29: 01: 06...and respect of African women. (**Monday, 22nd July, 2013**)

Response Five

IN: 16: 31: 57: 08...One cannot watch the video without hearing the word of God being uttered in the film. Words like God forbid, *Chineke*, oh my God, are often the catchwords in these films. For us here, anything happening to us is attributed to God. Fortune is credited to God not our own making. Likewise, whenever bad luck falls, it

is regarded in a positive way as the will of God. We always tell ourselves that God's time is always the right time.

OUT: 16: 34: 42: 23....Who are we to say no?" (Monday, 22nd July, 2013)

Response Six

IN: 13:40: 13: 11 Sister Shade is free in her house. Her husband respects her and listens to her. In fact he treats her as an equal from what we see in the film. She also wants the same to happen to other women too who are treated as inferiors to men in the church and in their respective homes. Unfortunately women at the church look at it differently. They resist change and treat Sister Shade unfairly.

OUT: 13: 42: 33: 01...But change will definitely catch up with them. (Tuesday, 27th August, 2013)

Response Seven

The first part is in sharp contrast with the second part. The first part presents us a submissive and dormant character. Really hopeless and can we be inspired? The answer is no. The second part is what is outstanding and paints her as a woman of destiny and principles. The cast in this second part is done well. But how do we choose her as a role model with such a divided or conflicting role? **(Tuesday, 10th September)**

Response Eight

In the Comforter, the girl excels in her work. She transforms the company's fortunes. No wonder she is entrusted with the finances of the company. In Mr&Mrs a friend to Susan performs exceptionally well at work and she is awarded with promotions back to back to the extent of being made to work from the headquarters of the company. We can all borrow a leaf from these two young and ambitious ladies in these films. **(Tuesday, 10th September)**

Response Nine

Though most films are meant for public viewing and are tailor-made for children, there are some though few that are influencing us to like and enjoy sex than before. In those films, I have learned a few tips that I employ in the bedroom whenever I am making love with my girlfriend. I have learned different styles of how to do sex. Love making for us has never been more exciting. **(Tuesday, 10th September)**

Response Ten

He is humble. He listens to the wife attentively. He is patient with the wife...you know she is very emotional and talkative. The pastor supports her even in the face of her rejection by members of the church especially among fellow women. He endures embarrassment subjected to him in public by her conduct. Ask women out there, they will surely say that they can't look for a better husband. **(Tuesday, 10th September)**

NTCHEWU FOCUS GROUP

This group comprised of four participants: two males and two females. The discussions took place on three different dates: Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013; Wednesday, 28th August, 2013 and Wednesday, 11th September, 2013. This was a family focus group of a middle income class family. The meetings lasted between 70 and 90 minutes in each session. At the time of the discussion, the father was a Master's degree holder and held a senior position in the public education sector. The mother was a housewife. The son was a first year undergraduate university student and the daughter was a Secondary School Certificate holder. Their ages ranged between 18 and 49.

The household was located in Ntchewu District's headquarter. Ntchewu is in the central region of Malawi and is primarily a matrilineal cultural community. Ngoni is the dominant ethnic group and Chichewa is their local language. Although the community is matrilineal in terms of family and inheritance cultural system, Ntchewu is a predominantly patriarchal society. The family members were not native to Ntchewu district. Both the husband and wife originated from a distant southern region district of Chikwawa. The family inherited a hybrid of patri-lineality and matri-lineality cultural beliefs and practices of Chikwawa district, where the Sena and Mang'anja inter-marry and form a fusion of these two opposing cultural practices. The Mang'anja ethnic group constitutes a matrilineal community and they are highly matriarchal. The Sena are a patrilineal community and are highly patriarchal.

Response One

IN: 17:41: 57: 30... I watch movies during my free time as I am mostly at work. So, I watch as one way of relaxing. Some of Nollywood films which I have watched include My Love, Endless Love, Passionate Love, Dust and Ashes, Sister Mary, Real Love, Separated Kingdom, and Troublesome. Some of the actors/resses they mentioned included Rita Dominic, Omotola Jelade, Ini Edo, Genevivi Nnaji, Desmond Elliot, Nkem Owoh, Stephano Okereke, Mike Ezuronye, Patience Ozokwor Nunsu Diobe, and Van Vicker.

OUT: 17: 43: 31: 09...I like romantic movies. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Two

IN: 17:45: 20: 22 I like romantic films because they match the needs of my age as I am still looking for a girl....

OUT: 17: 45: 50: 11 who can be my life partner. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Three

IN:17: 46: 30: 13 I like romantic films as they help me to understand aspects of love and relationships such as infidelity, faithfulness, and how to find a suitable partner..

OUT: 17:47: 13:51.... for a long term relationship. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Four

IN: 17: 49: 51: 10... I like Nollywood films because they equip me with knowledge for managing and resolving conflicts which occur in relationships. The movies also help me to develop skills with which to take care of the needs of my partner...

OUT: 17: 51: 00: 01... hence stronger relationships. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Five

IN: 17:55: 42: 30 I like these movies because in traditional (cultural) Nigerian movies the mode of dress and traditional ceremonies depicted in such movies such traditional weddings resembled those in Malawi. We share so much in cultures...

OUT: 17: 58: 29: 04... and this makes me to like them more. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Six

IN: 18: 01: 10: 53 I have difficulties to understand Western movies because their ascent is difficult to comprehend while Nollywood actors/actresses articulated the English language in a manner....

OUT: 18: 02: 30: 49... which is relatively easier to understand. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Seven

IN: 18: 11: 31: 44... I reckon the films *Mr & Mrs*, *The Royal Fight* and *Not With My Daughter* have a very Malawian set-up. In *Mr & Mrs*., Ken and his family that include a wife and children, live under the roof of his parents' home. This created problems for the young couple and the mother intruded so much into their private lives. In the end, the marriage ended. In *The Royal Fight*, the royal household is an epitome of the extended family. There are frictions, fights and also joys among the members of the household. In *Not With My Daughter*, Ada and Hussein's family faces challenges because of the external interference from Hussein's people. The marriage collapsed in the end. All I can say is that there are joys and cries in the extended family. I would not have gone to school if it were not for my uncle paying me fees, I would not have gotten this far and earn a living on my own. At the same time, I face a chain of responsibilities to take care of my nieces, nephews and my ageing mum...

OUT: 18: 13: 55: 19... in my village. (Tuesday, 23d July, 2013)

Response Eight

IN: 19:12: 32: 10 Nigerian movies are a "teacher" which equips me with a variety of...

OUT: 19: 13: 00: 00... survival skills.

Response Nine

IN: 19:35: 09: 10 Nigerian movies portrayed women as evil. For example, when the marriages is on the verge of a break up, often women are the ones who are depicted as going to the traditional doctors looking for *juju* (love potions) with which to redeem their marriage from divorce. In some cases an African woman is depicted as a cruel individual. This is with regard to Nollywood actresses who abuse step-children and orphans, and those women

OUT: 19: 37: 00: 15 who do not respect their husbands. (Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013)

Response Ten

IN: 19: 39: 13: 24 The mode of dressing such as mini-skirts and see-through clothes undermine the integrity of the African women as the dressing, apart from exposing the woman's nakedness, also reduces women to sexual beings rather than human beings

OUT: 19:40: 22: 03 ...with rights and needs.(Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013)

Response Eleven

IN: 19: 45: 02: 17... From the start, the King admits a girl from a poor family background into the royal household. The girl has been disfigured by the crown prince during a fight the two had in the girl's village. Apparently, the king has decreed to his son to take her as a wife because according to him no man would be interested to marry her owing to her disfigured face. The Queen as a mother is

throughout outstanding, offering leadership in the royal household in the absence of the ailing king. She is impartial, makes sound judgments and strong to protect all the members of the royal family. Also, as a family, she and the king adopted an outsider to become their son and was treated as their first born, nobody knew that she was not a biological son till it was revealed when he was old enough. He was treated as equal to their biological son. The same can be said of the main character, the wife to the princes, she is throughout depicted as a mature, compassion and mature woman who has the affair of each and every member of the royal household. She treats each and every one with dignity and never believes in revenge especially when her sister-in-marriage harassed and ridiculed her over her barren situation. She has the authority to send her out of the royal household as the reigning Queen. The heir apparent too, the prince is in the latter parts shown as a level headed and befitting young king. He protects his wife from abuse when everybody else advises him to settle for a different women to enable him have children.

OUT: 19: 49: 05: 51... This is what we Malawians regard as *Umunthu* at its best.
(Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013)

Response Twelve

IN: 19:51: 00: 40... The mode of dressing of African women in Nigerian movies should not be viewed through the lenses of African cultural values. The putting on of trousers and other clothes (miniskirts, etc.) which reveal the sensitive body parts of women are simply in line modern trends of fashion and economic life. Women play a crucial role in business as their pictures are used for advertising...

OUT: 19:53:10: 40 and other commercial enterprises. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Thirteen

IN: 19:56: 18: 59 In some instances Nigerian movies portray women as heroes, strong leaders and caring individuals. For instance, a scene which is prevalent in most Nigerian movies whereby women in these Nollywood movies teaches us to encourage our poor husbands to brave challenges up to a point of prosperity.

OUT: 19:58: 07: 14 In this case, an African woman is perceived as a caring and wise individual. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Fourteen

IN: 20: 06: 38: 41 Every time we watch the films we feel satisfied because the stories make sense to us. The people are like us. The way they depict their way of life, makes a representation of our own life experiences here. They show typical village stories; men like us, women like our women, drawing water in the rivers, putting on similar attire as our own women. But I do not have the same attachment to Non-Nigerian films. To me everything they show looks alien; their buildings, their people and their lifestyle. It is for the eyes of the people of that sort.

OUT: 20:08: 11: 11not African (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Fifteen

IN: 20:14: 13: 46 We do have witchcraft here as well. It is done in secret. We hear reports of women going for love portions or outdoing each other magically because

of a man. But they do not do so openly. Our women counterparts in Nigeria seem to do it openly as a common practice. The magnitude is too sickening. It is not the Malawian way of doing things.

OUT: 20: 16: 30: 18....their films tell us it is the Nigerian way. (**Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013**)

Response Sixteen

IN: 19:20: 01: 18 Let's face it. We can't pretend that things remain as they are. Susan and her friend play well to reflect this reality in our society today. The friend reflects the new generation of middle working class women who would sacrifice everything to make it in life and even surpass men. We cannot help it and say they had better stay at home. We modern men these days seem to understand this and accept the reality. Gone are the days when wives had to be at home waiting for you when you return home. As for Susan, as in the second section of the film, she is now liberal in everything she does. She is everything you can call modern. She dresses fashionably now and goes out at any time of the day or night. She is no longer spending all the time in the kitchen. The housemaid is the one doing most of the cooking now.

OUT: 19: 22: 34: 51 ...She spends much of her time now on the phone with the supposed new boyfriend. (**Wednesday, 28th August, 2013**)

Response Seventeen

IN: 20:00: 48: 41 The outspoken women in Nollywood films should not be viewed as harsh or cruel. Rather, they should be viewed as vigilant and strong characters that are simply resisting any form of abuse and discrimination against them. Such depiction of women in Nollywood films suggests that.

OUT: 20: 04: 01: 47 ...Women can equally make good leaders at various level of the society.....(**Wednesday, 11th September, 2013**)

Response Eighteen

We have nothing but praises for her role in the film. She is successful as a career woman at her employer's company. Her conduct is superb and wins the heart of everybody watching. She even plays a heroic role in saving the life of the same woman who stabbed her at the back, Henry's aunt. Stupid enough she opts to kill herself in the end. This is a sign of weakness in her. I wonder what was going in the heads of the producers to leave us with such hopeless ending. (**Wednesday, 11th September, 2013**)

Response Nineteen

His marriage is on the rock. He fails to live up to his responsibility as a husband to the wife. He always cares about his church members. He would have strike a balance and his church would have understood his position. (**Wednesday, 11th September, 2013**)

Response Twenty

I have learned how to take care of my family as a husband and a father. I have learned the art of being a responsible dad to my kids. I have learned how to look after my children into mature and responsible children other than spoiling them. I have learned how to partake in their care other than leaving it to be a wife's business alone. My father did that to my mother...leaving child care to her only...and I have to do it my way...different way...we watch some of the films, we see men in labour ward standing by their women....it is not women's business...it is our show as well.

(Wednesday, 11th September, 2013)

CHIKWAWA FOCUS GROUP

This was a rural based focus group from Chikwawa, a southern region district. There were a total of 23 participants: 21 males and 13 females. Initially, a total of 10 Nollywood film viewers were recruited for participation: 6 females and 4 males. The first meeting involved the recruited ten participants however several people gate-crashed the second meeting. A good number of these gate-crashers had prior knowledge of some of the films discussed. As stated earlier in chapter four of the thesis, in fact, it is these gate-crashers who appeared to speak their own mind and hence contributed valuable data to the study. The group held two meetings in all: Thursday, 24th July, 2013 and Friday, 29th August, 2013. The first meeting lasted about two hours and the second meeting lasted about two and a half hours. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Chikwawa has a combination of multiracial and

patrilineal communities. The narratives during the discussions reflected this cultural and social dynamic. Although patriarchal could be described as an overall phenomenon in the district, the matrilineal Mang'anja ethnic communities are subjected to strong matriarchal practices that are evident in every aspect of their lifestyle (Mandala, 1984). The discussants age range was between 18 and 55 years. The discussions were all held in Chichewa.

Response One

IN: 13: 02: 51: 29 We normally watch not less than 5 movies a week of these Nollywood films watches more than 5 movies a week. Some of the movies that we watch at home include: Uzinga, The Power of Love, 21 Days with Christ and Mistake Marriage. Most of the actors the discussants like are; Ramzy Noah, Genevive Nanji, Van Vicker, Mercy Johnson, Desmond Ellioti , Yvone Nelson and...

OUT: 13: 04: 55: 01..... Nonso Diobi. (Wednesday, 24th July, 2013)

Response Two

IN: 13:07: 23: 40 It is a bad influence. It is breeding pretenders as men of God. Was Pastor James genuine in the film The Pastor's Wife? I doubt. No wonder he could not stand the crisis and resorted going public drinking and smoking when everyone though they had a living saint in the pastor. These people simply do it as a means to survival. We have so many of them in our communities today.

OUT: 13: 08: 30: 42...Hypocrites! (Wednesday, 24th July, 2013)

Response Three

IN: 13:50: 06: 16 I have never been in a classroom. But the Nigerian films are self-explanatory. The pictures communicate to me clearly...what is acted in the films is common among us...not much is completely foreign to us...actions speak for themselves. It is clear. They speak English in a simple way....like they are speak simple English which is....

OUT: 13:52:00:09.... sometimes with their own language. (**Wednesday, 24th July, 2013**)

Response Four

IN: 14:04: 10: 24...The movies relate well because they are from Africa, hence they depict what really happens in an African setting, “since our beliefs and values are similar”. Most of us women prefer romantic and religious movies to magic movies “as there is too much crying in magic movies”. The love and romantic movies seem original and outlines what happens in our African setting “the romantic are adventurous thus inspiring and the religious ones lift up our faith”.

OUT: 14: 06: 10: 13...the Nigerian movies are mostly entertaining and inspiring. (**Wednesday, 24th July, 2013**)

Response Five

IN: 14: 10: 44: 18 We see rich people arranging marriages for their children. We also some parents arrange marriages based on the conduct of their children like the

case in this film *The Comforter*. Some arrange marriages based on the parents' family connections. Others based on family relations, for instance, distance cousins are permissible to marry each other and socially this is acceptable....

OUT: 14: 12: 23: 07... to keep relation ties stronger. **(Wednesday, 24th July, 2013)**

Response Six

IN: 14: 45: 39: 01 They portray a negative aspect as the woman is always submissive "of course, in some few cases, she is shown as a strong willed person". ..

OUT: 14: 47:00: 03...some of the movies teach a woman to be self-reliant and creative.**(Wednesday, 24th July, 2013)**

Response Seven

IN: 16:14: 20: 29 In homes, in front of our family members, whether chatting or doing household chores like preparing food, we do put on a cloth on top of our attire. We see that in the film *Mr & Mrs*, Susan is always well-dressed at home preparing the food for her family. Cooking is what characterises us Malawian women, and our friends in Nigeria give us the similar impression through their films. In *The Royal Fight*, we see the Queen always in her traditional African dress. I never see her in a pair of trousers or in fancy clothes. Her daughter in-law who later assumed the rank of being a Queen follows suit. That is what we do here in Malawi. Our tradition does not encourage women to compete with men wearing trousers or

OUT: 16: 17: 17: 01....walking out and about everywhere as men do. (**Thursday, 29th August, 2013**)

Response Eight

IN: 16: 20: 21: 16 As far as I am concerned, since I was a little girl, we, Malawians have been living as one people. We treat each other as children of one family. In good times and in bad times, we are bound together. In weddings, relatives, neighbours, friends come to help. In death, the whole village comes to standstill, everyone mourn regardless of how close or distant you are in social relations. When there is a famine, whoever has food shares those who are in need. I for one cannot have a peace of mind eating, drinking and throwing away waste food while the neighbour is dying of hunger. Kids of a fellow village mate, even from a distance, are sleeping on empty stomachs. Their blood will be on my head. That's not Malawian way. We share and share till we have nothing left to share. I saw my grandparents doing it in 50s, 60s. My parents did it in 70s. I did it in 80s, 90s and now I see my grandchildren following suit. The spirit continues elsewhere here these days....

OUT: 16:23:00:31.....I watch the same in practice in these Nigerian films. (**Thursday, 29th August, 2013**)

Response Nine

IN: 16:26: 14: 19 What we see in the wife of the pastor is an arrogant, selfish and egoistic depiction of a woman who gets it all wrong. To be independent implies an

exercise of maturity and respect towards the people around you. She is now in a traditional village community and she wants to behave as if she is still in the USA. By the way, she doesn't mind that her husband is a pastor and as such she has a role and persona that is ascribed to her. People have expectations of her. She has failed in her duties and.....

OUT: 16:29:00:01 there is no excuse for whatever she does in any respect.
(Thursday, 29th August, 2013)

Response Ten

IN: 16: 34: 51: 10 We sure need more of Sister Shade's character today. Why is it a problem if it is a woman and if a man does the same it is never an issue? This is very bad. Why should women be associated with a limited way of behaviour and at the same time it is accepted that men can do whatever they fancy with their life? Sister Shade should be commended for her unconventional behaviour. It is necessary if we are to change the status quo. Women, especially in the church are being treated as inferiors and men use the Bible to justify that. Come on, it's time to move with the times. We have to be talking the language of equal sons and daughters of God here and not the master and servant relationship of a man to a woman in homes and..

OUT: 16: 37: 28:17.....in our churches in this modern era. **(Thursday, 29th August, 2013)**

Response Eleven

Here is a man of God who devotes his time and energy to serve the flock 100 per cent. His house is open to everyone to seek spiritual and even social advices at all times. He even sacrifices his family life and privacy by allowing to be disrupted at awkward hours. Very few church ministers that I know can reach to this extreme. He is humble though educated. He is a good listener and a good counsellor to his flock.

(Thursday, 29th August, 2013)

Response Twelve

I started watched these films when my brother bought our first ever digital satellite dish in 2004. The channel, movie Magic featured a lot of Nigerian videos. In those first days of my TV movie viewing, I felt a great appeal whenever I saw a woman judge or a woman lawyer in the movie. There was this particular movie which I can't remember its title, the woman lawyer was outstanding in arguing a case in defence of her client in a court of law. Looking at her; a woman and a black woman for that matter, inspired me a lot. By then I was doing my standard 4 and was only 9 years old. Since then I have wanted to be like her and I want to be a lawyer one day. Whatever I do now is to prepare myself for that challenging but exciting task. I want to be a lawyer and nothing has changed my mind ever since that day. **(Thursday, 29th August)**

Response Thirteen

These films teach me how to love my husband and show him that I do care about our love. At first I had no idea. I can now freely and openly call my husband such names I hear lovers call each other in films such as 'sweetheart', 'darling', 'honey'.

(Thursday, 29th August, 2013)

Response Fourteen

These films teach these women wonderful things. Since she became addicted to the films, she brings in something new to the bedroom. Hugging, kissing and caressing are now becoming the order of the day in our bedroom before love making. It makes us feel a newlywed couple. **(Thursday, 29th August)**

FOCUS GROUP SEVEN: MANGOCHI COMMUNITY

The group comprised of seven family members: four females and three males with aged between 20 and 54 years. Mangochi is a lake district located in the southern region of Malawi. It is a predominantly matrilineal community. The district has the largest Muslim population in the country. Despite the local ethnic Yao culture being matrilineal, the introduction of Islam by Arabic slave traders arguably turned the communities to adopt patriarchal beliefs and practices.

Participants came from a mixture of backgrounds: some were natives of Mangochi and some were born to parents who migrated to the community. The participants were a combination of wives, husbands and in-laws belonging to one extended

family unit at Mangochi 'Boma' (district headquarter). It is a semi-urban community and participants had an overall above minimum educational qualifications. Some were primary school teachers and others were health workers. Three meetings took place on a Thursday, 25th July, 2013; Friday, 30th August, 2013 and Friday, 13th September, 2013. The meetings lasted between 90 and 110 minutes per session.

Response One

IN: 08: 35: 11: 49 Against all odds she donates life in the form of blood to the dying aunt of Henry. This is the woman who ruined her future. This is the woman who did not even give her an opportunity to explain herself or defend herself before Henry and his family on what happened that led to the death of her former lover, Henry's cousin so many years back. This is the woman who made her lose her job and lose her home. She forgave her and saved her life. This is rare among us....

OUT: 08: 37:00:07 It is a good lesson on how to live for other despite whatever bad they do to us. (Thursday, 25th July, 2013)

Response Two

IN: 08: 39:17:23 Nigerian films are entertaining, we just love the actors and actresses and above all, Nigerian films teach us some lessons. As for western films we don't watch may be it is because we are used to Nigerian films and we don't find them entertaining. We like watching Love, Magic and Religious films. Love films are always entertaining and teach us a lot of lessons. Magic films though scary are good, have lessons by the end of it because some magic films are full of scaring things but

you find that at the end of it they talk about God or remind us to trust in God so it is not really about magic but they also have an element of *Umulungu*.

OUT: 08: 42: 33: 20.....Religious films are good also because they deepen our Christianity life and faith. **(Thursday, 25th July, 2013)**

Response Three

IN: 09:13: 39: 04 The way they act their films it's like you are watching real life things you even forget that it is drama when you are watching. The actors and actresses too are just real and genuine...

OUT: 09: 14: 14: 47.....they know how to act. **(Thursday, 25th July, 2013)**

Response Four

IN: 09: 19: 52: 00 I watch over 10 films daily, because we watch the films on Africa Magic and it's all about films.....

OUT: 09: 20: 20: 41..... throughout the day. **(Thursday, 25th July, 2013)**

Response Five

IN: 10: 33: 01: 48 I am a Christian and I was dating a Moslem girl for four years but her people have refused to discuss with my people on marriage arrangement for the past two years. They cannot simply take it. To them it does not occur that I am the rightful partner to their daughter. They ended up marrying her to one of her distant cousin who is also a Moslem. What this film is relaying to us is a reflection of true stories. It happened before me. It happened to me.....

OUT: 10:35: 51: 10....It is happening to other people. (**Thursday, 25th July, 2013**)

Response Six

IN: 10:44:11: 06 Look at the films in *The Royal Fight*, *Mr & Mrs.* and *The Comforter*. Much as there is an African aspect of the show, the other side of it shows off some sort of richness. Look at the buildings, the furniture in the houses, the fancy cars used, the parties taking place and how people get excited with anything to do with money. Maybe this portrays the place of material wealth in Nigerian society and the extent their life is controlled by it. We are a humble people. Though money is important, we normally do not go to such extremes of placing it above everything in our life....

OUT: 10:47: 01: 36... as these Nigerian films show us. (**Thursday, 25th July, 2013**)

Response Seven

IN: 14:16: 03: 29 I am a Christian but I was born and raised in this community which is predominantly a Muslim stronghold. The experience I have had for more than 20 years now, is that we and our Muslim brothers and sisters have lived peacefully. We have our issues yes regarding faith but we have learned to respect each other. We find ourselves as Malawians first despite our religious differences. I think whoever made the film is anti-Islam....

OUT: 14: 18: 51: 34....I would feel very uncomfortable to watch it alongside my Muslim neighbour or friend.(**Friday, 30th August, 2013**)

Response Eight

IN: 14: 20: 59: 13 Ada addresses her husband as her equal by simply calling him Hussein which is strange to the family. The local girl who was taken as a second wife calls Hussein master and treats him as a king. Ada confronts Hussein to explain himself to her for his actions like when she suspects that Hussein was having an extra-marital relationship with Adija. Ada confronts even her mother-in-law over her child. The mother-in-law forced the girl to go to the local Islamic school while Ada had wished the child to go to a secular school.....

OUT: 14: 23:01:06...Ada is a no-nonsense woman and those around her in Hussein's family know that she is not a pushover. **(Friday, 30th August, 2013)**

Response Nine

IN: 15: 10: 13: 39...Such are common problems facing women in patrilineal communities. It is even worse in case one is...

OUT: 15:10: 58:43 a full-time housewife. **(Friday, 30th August, 2013)**

Response Ten

IN: 15: 19: 08: 37...We have learnt a lot of lessons, like to believe in God, to trust in God, Deepen our faith and Christian life. To love one another, be kind enough, sometimes to be careful with friends and be careful in the way we do things....

OUT: 15: 21: 44: 05....not just to trust anybody. **(Friday, 30th August, 2013)**

Response Eleven

IN: 15: 30: 37: 16 Most of the times, Nigerian films portray a bad picture about an African woman because in most films, women do bad things like poison their husbands, trusting witch doctors in every problem that they have. It is very rare to find women putting their trust in God whenever they have problems. Sometimes they do but most of the times its about women and.....

OUT: 15: 32: 11: 09..... witch doctors or witch craft. **(Friday, 30th August, 2013)**

Response Twelve

IN: 10: 11: 57: 00 We don't think there's any aspect of women empowerment in Nigerian films. It's just about entertainment...

OUT: 10:12: 30: 46.....and lesson teaching. **(Friday, 13th September, 2013)**

Response Thirteen

They teach me strategies of pleasing my husband. Through the films I now know what to do when my husband is moody and to bring him back to happiness. I have learned to hug him immediately he arrives home from work. I have learned to wear various colours for different occasions and more important to put on the colours that are sexy attire when he is around home so as to keep his head rolling all over me.

(Friday, 13th September)

Response Fourteen

My husband is proving to be the closest friend I have. I am just discovering this of late. **(Friday, 13th September)**

Response Fifteen

In *The Pastor's Wife*...no sane wife to a pastor would behave to that extent unless she is mad...we have seen scandalous wives of some church minister's but not that extreme...that to me looks insane. However, she stands up for women's rights and everybody misread her initiative. Maybe she is not bad at all. In *Mrs and Mrs.* is another example of a confusing portrayal: why accepting to stay in the ex-husband's family house after divorce and remain chained to their dictates? The same plot gives the impression that she is now free from the husband and enjoys her new lease of life. It is ironical because you can't claim to be

independent of the man when you still opt to stay in their home. **(Friday, 13th September)**

LUNZU FOCUS GROUP

The group comprised of 13 participants: six females and seven males. This was an urban- based community group with an age range between 20 and 65 years. Two meetings took place on the following dates: Friday, 20th July, 2013 and Saturday, 14th September, 2013. Participants came from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Some were professionals such as teachers (2), some were technicians

(1), some small scale business persons (vendors 6), students (2) and video show operators (2). The meeting lasted between 100 and 120 minutes per session.

Response One

IN: 19: 19: 25: 13 Our families are so much attached to the church and traditional rulers. Chiefs are powerful in our society. The church also is becoming important tradition of our life. As individuals, we need these institutions more than they need us. However the community's strength relies....

OUT: 19: 21: 01: 00... on how prosperous individual families are. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Two

IN: 19: 22: 00: 00 The films are becoming popular among us because the actors and actresses are also black just like Malawians. They are also educative to the population as each film has its own lesson such as evil of polygamy, change of one's religious beliefs.

Though Malawians may not understand the Nigerian language, but since Malawians are African too, they are able to understand the non- verbal signals Nigerians use. Their dressing code is loved by many Malawians especially the youth. They are very good in choice of costume that portrays real life situations such as the costumes used....

OUT: 19: 27: 11: 01.... by the African doctors.**(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Three

IN: 19: 29: 01: 39 African culture respects privacy yet Nigerian films encourage exposure of breasts mainly in girl's dressing. It encourages polygamy where the elder wife is usually mistreated. It has negatively affected theatre change by reducing creativity since Malawians just copy what others....

OUT: 19: 31: 00: 13...have already developed. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Four

IN: 19: 31: 10: 29 We see the actors, they look like us. The stories these films show are similar to our own stories. The market places, the villages and the problems the people face in the Nigerian films are what we too confront on daily basis. Poverty, corruption, witchcraft, marriage and love wrangles and you name it. Everything we watch in Nigerian films it is like we are watching our own communities. We even forget that it is the product of fiction....it feels real.

OUT: 19:32:19: 41....No more these Chinese films for us. Nigerian films or no films.... **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Five

IN: 19: 32: 51: 00 How our counterparts in Nigeria love their women! I feel envious. They doors for them and usher them inside or let them out gently. We don't do that here. Now these films are bringing this aspect and I see a few guys in town doing the same. Strange as it looks.....

OUT: 19: 34:00:00... but our women feel good about it. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Six

IN: 20: 10: 33: 14 I am a vendor and small scale commercial farmer. Nigerian films teach me survival tactics. You know how difficult it is for small people like us in these rural trading centres to catch up with the big bosses in business. But watching the videos I see somewhere far from here my fellow African is facing the same problem. I learn their ways of running their affairs. Yes, there is also much vending in Nigeria. There are also shanty markets to sell farm produce in Nigeria. The way they struggle and manage life gives me hope...

OUT: 20: 12: 53: 51.... I march on. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Seven

IN: 20: 31: 09: 11 What difference does it make? If a man comes here very late every day is no issue just because he is a man. Whenever the woman gets a job that keeps her out for long hours then it is an exception...

OUT: 20: 32: 35: 08...That is not fair at all. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Eight

IN: 21: 06: 17: 44 At home she enjoys equal rights to her husband. The husband never complains about her autonomous lifestyle. Then why should people outside the house make an issue out of it? She is even taking initiative to emancipate women

at the local church. She is telling them to be free and compete with me in the church's leadership position. Unfortunately, they don't see it this way...

OUT: 21:08: 21: 01.... and they do not appreciate her efforts. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Nine

IN: 21: 10: 07: 43 How can adultery and arrogance towards one's husband and the members of the church community be translated to an act of balancing power relations? In fact, it appears she is abusing power. In our view, the balance of power should be a two-way affair and should be done with respect. She chooses to boss around the fellow women at the church, they didn't like it; she chooses to dictate to the pastor what and how he has to handle his work, what a pity; she chooses to go drinking in public on the streets, she shocks everyone and the worst of all is that she manipulates the junior pastor and seduces him in the church building.

OUT: 21: 11: 59: 59.....The whole act is unacceptable. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Ten

IN: 22:05:29:18 Our society is a closed one and very much conservative in most aspects. Love is normally practised in closed doors. We see it as normal and part of our traditions. It matters less whether one is urbanite or not. This has been the way of our life. These Nigerian films make us to be open with our feelings and emotions. We express ourselves freely and openly to our men. They too seem to learn the art of being proud of us in public. Now, we see young couples hugging each other openly

in front of their relations or kids. It is foreign yes, but we enjoy it. In the film *The Comforter*, for instance, we see how Henry openly loved his girlfriend and showed his affection even in front of his parents. We don't do that here normally. The prince was doing the same to his wife in *The Royal Fight*...going with her everywhere and sitting close to each other before his parent and listening to her words and advice on how to handle some delicate matters affecting the royal household and the community....

OUT: 22: 09: 34: 19.....I feel jealous really (Friday, 26th July, 2013)

Response Eleven

IN: 22:10:05: 01 It is enviable. I do emulate the actresses. At my age, 65, you may think I am past my prime time but I still make most of these video shows outings.

OUT: 22: 11: 00: 00....I wish I could roll back the years. (Friday, 26th July, 2013)

Response Twelve

IN: 22: 15: 17: 36 Any film featuring Mercy Johnson is a must watch for me. Any film featuring Kin Akidu is a never miss for me. Patience Ozokwar is another hit. These are genuine actors. I always feel I am in my own village witnessing the goings on whenever I watch these actors in the way they depict themselves as village people. We have been missing this flavour for decades...

OUT: 22:17: 11: 01 These Chinese and European films do not feature anything closer to us. **(Friday, 26th July, 2013)**

Response Thirteen

We see in the films, when marriages are on the verge of breaking up often women are depicted seeking the intervention of witch or traditional doctors. The witch doctors are seen offering these desperate women love portions or juju to save their relationships. In many cases it works and the power of juju is exonerated. Who doesn't want to save her marriage at any cost if she still believes in it and loves her man? It is no wonder that now some women even in town have resorted using our own sources of juju to solve their marriage issues. I sometimes hear them saying if it works in Nigeria...as their films show it, why can't it work in reality with us here?

(Saturday, 14th September)

Response Fourteen

I just watch for fun. Entertainment... Full stop... I am not sure....some goodsome rubbish...I don't know..... **(Saturday, 14th September)**

Response Fifteen

Nigerian films are like a teacher. They teach us so many things in life. By watching them we learn how to perfect our love relations. We learn how to respect each other. We also learn how to be generous with others in need. We learn how to handle difficult situations like poverty.....these films to me are a teacher. They equip me with survival skills. **(Saturday, 14th September)**

Response Sixteen

In her presence he is remorseful for the pain inflicted on his wife by him and other members of his family and he offers comfort to her. Behind her he connives with his relations and abuses the wife. You cannot call this is love. If he loves her then he is a weak character. (**Saturday, 14th September**)

Response Seventeen

Here is a woman who everybody will point at as successful because of her progression at work. But as a married woman she is proven a failure. She can't take care of her home. She ends up in forcing a husband to sleep with a housemaid because she is most of the times away from home, coming back very late in night. She is one sided and fails to balance her role as a family woman and a career woman. She is not exemplary. (**Saturday, 14th September, 2013**)

NKHATABAY FOCUS GROUP

Two meetings took place with this group: Sunday, 1st September, 2013 and Sunday, 15th September, 2015. The meetings lasted between 60 minutes and 75 minutes. There were five participants, all males and their ages ranged from 30-50 years old. The group belonged to the community that is patrilineal and highly patriarchal. This is a rural based community but with almost all of its members possessing above average educational qualifications: lawyer (university graduate 1), teacher (university graduate 1), student (undergraduate 1), domestic worker (primary school dropout 1) and a farmer (secondary school/ High School certificate holder 1). The language used was Chichewa but at times participants would code-switch between

Chichewa and Tonga (their local language). Four of the members belonged to the Tonga ethnic group and one member belonged to the Tumbuka ethnic group.

Response One

IN: 17:21:32: 01 Look at the Queen. The way she dresses, she looks like a traditional woman with typical of African traditional attire. She looks like a true representative of African women. Also, the king and his council of elders and the issues they tackle on a daily basis are very traditional. As a matter of fact, the film gives a beautiful account of us Africans and our traditional customs. Even the prince and his young wife, though they are rich and exposed to modern life in the palace, they remain true to the tradition. They go on foot to their garden with their hoes in their hands. Any true African watching this film.....

OUT: 17: 24: 00: 40I am sure will be proud of its portrayal. **(Sunday, 1st September, 2013)**

Response Two

We watch in some films where a poor family in order to cope with economic hardships the man orders his wife to engage in extra-marital affairs with rich men for money to support the family. In other films it is common to watch men raping women, especially the vulnerable like the orphans or the mentally challenged ones as rituals for quick riches. **(Sunday, 15th September, 2013)**

Response Three

There are still a lot more men who live and practice the ideals of respect and love for their spouses in homes. The films simply reflect what the real African man is and can be. At the same time sets as a lesson to some of us who are still lagging behind in respecting our better-halves and deny them the genuine love. Henry in *The Comforter* passionately loves his girlfriend regardless of her poor background. Henry almost commits suicide upon finding out that his girlfriend has taken out her own life. In *Not With My Daughter*, Hussein demonstrates his truly love to Ada. To be honest, Ada is problematic somehow but in most of the times Hussein is keeping his cool and even apologising to her out of respect and love for her. In *The Royal Fight*, the prince too is amazing. He marries a woman from unknown background and loves her despite pressure from his people to take a second wife, due to the wife's inability to give birth, he remain arrogant in his belief for her till the wife strongly advises him to doing so. How many of us can stand by our loved ones in the face of pressure from all corners of the community to consider n gives us a child?

(Sunday, 15th September)

Response Four

The prince, despite resistance in the first place, yields to the pressure of his subjects and took a second wife whom he never showed respect and love at all. It is like is after using her as a means to have a son to inherit his kingdom and not based on love and conviction. **(Sunday, 15th September)**

Response Five

Are they real? Do these things happen in reality? Most of the stuff appears cosmetic to me. The houses and the cars they drive. Most of it looks really an exaggeration for me. Houses as big as hotels and the display of riches like nobody's business. Is this Nigerian way of life? No way. I doubt. Is this the way other Africans live life, I doubt and which Africa? The flamboyance of the riches is just ridiculous. It's something else. Are the films reflecting African lifestyle or the foreign lifestyle? Look at The Royal Fight...the setting of the king's home looks completely. To me whatever happens in that royal household reflects very Western to me...using knives, forks around the table.....is that African way really? I don't know. **(Sunday, 15th September)**

Response Six

To me Ada is arrogant. That is not women empowerment. That is not gender equality. We have to respect our in-laws, our husbands and their culture. Why marrying into a culture and to a people you naturally look down upon? **(Sunday, 15th September, 2015)**

Appendix 4: A sample of Nollywood video cassette cover reflecting how the male and female characters are cast in the films in relation to men-women gender relations. This cover is for advert purpose as it is put in a compact that has a collection of more than one Nollywood films.



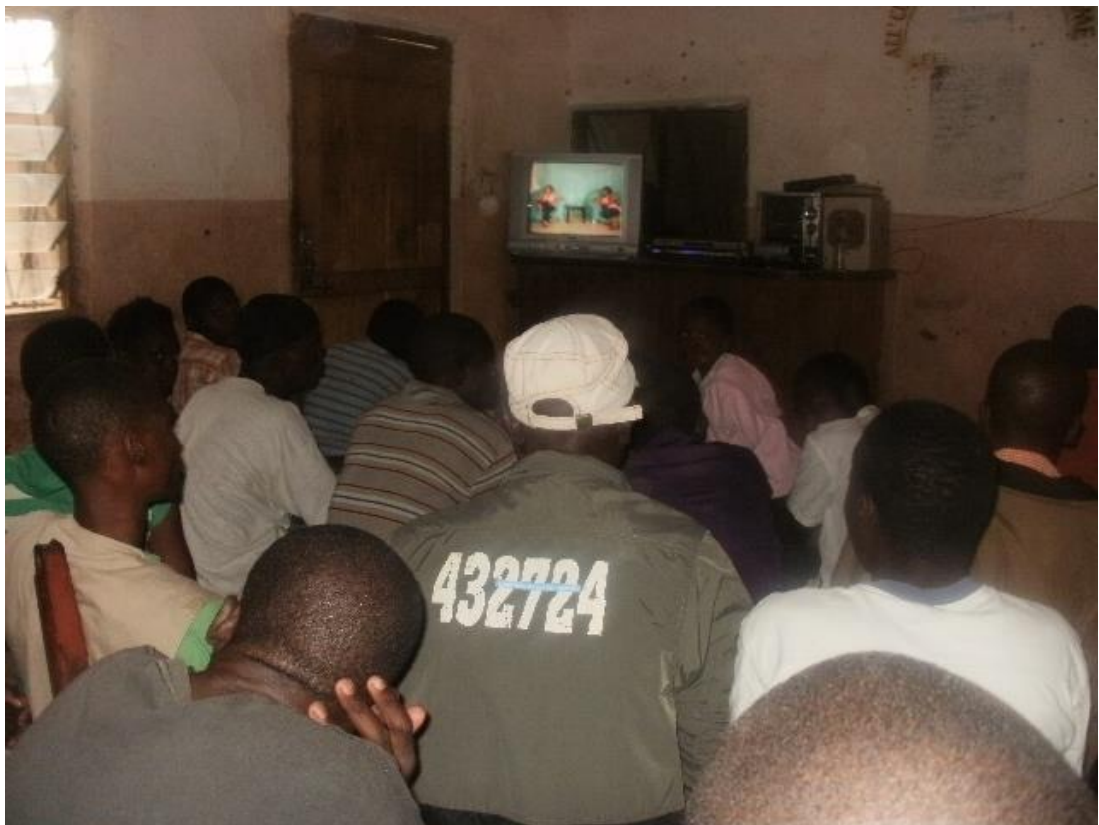
Picture taken: July, 2013.

**Appendix 5: Pay –Per-View Video Parlour in the sub-urban
site of Mangochi**



Picture taken: April, 2012

**Appendix 6: Inside the video parlour at Lunzu Trading
Centre in the outskirts of Blantyre Commercial City**



Picture taken: September, 2014

**Appendix 7: One of the modest video parlour in Lunzu
Town (Blantyre) bearing a catalogue or list of films that are
available for show on this particular day**



Picture taken: August, 2013

APPENDIX 8: A TYPICAL VILLAGE VIDEO PARLOUR IN THE REMOTE AREA OF NKHOTA-KOTA



Picture taken: April, 2012

APPENDIX 9: INSIDE A GRASS THATCHED VILLAGE
VIDEO PARLOUR IN NKHOTA-KOTA



Picture taken: April, 2012

APPENDIX 10: FREE-TO-AIR DIGITAL SATELLITE DISHES IN ONE OF THE VILLAGES IN CHIKWAWA



Picture taken: April, 2012

Appendix 11: Nollywood video vendor in Nkhota-Kota



Picture: May, 2012

Appendix 12: List of Nollywood Films Watched for the purpose of this research during the period 2012-2014.

1. Not With My Daughter
2. There is a Scandal
3. People in Power
4. 11th hour
5. No one but you
6. Bedroom Assassin
7. Greedy Sex
8. Wicked Lineage
9. The Impostor
10. Suzzy Mama
11. Sinful Truth
12. My Darling Princes
13. Memories of Madness
14. Illicit Romance

15. My Love My Sorrow

16. The Queens

17. Never Love a Prince

18. Abimbola

19. Gucci Girls

20. Tears for Passion

21. Royal Gamble

22. Ayitale

23. Sexy Criminal

24. Ridiculous

25. Royal Heart Break

26. Between Two Worlds

27. A Nite with her

28. Hamza

29. Pleasure Boosters

30. The Kings Search

31. Blood Apart

32. Snake Lovers
33. Love Alone
34. Wild Chicks
35. Betrayal
36. After the Wedding
37. My soul mate
38. Beyonce and Rihanna
39. My sister's tears
40. Heartless
41. Royal Daughters
42. Dry my tears
43. Prince of the Niger
44. Beauty and The Beast
45. Mad Sex
46. Soul of a Woman
47. Tears in my Eyes
48. Real Love

49. Mr. & Mrs.
50. The Pastor's Wife
51. Sex in the City
52. Romantic Touch
53. Fire Fox
54. Edid (The Bond)
55. At the altar
56. The King and the Princes
57. Caught in the middle
58. Totally lost
59. Thanks for coming
60. Bank Job
61. Queen Latifah
62. Twins on Fire
63. Irreplaceable
64. Waste collector
65. Scars of Womanhood

66. Yahoo Millionaire
67. Royal Stronghold
68. Unconditional Love
69. Queen Desire
70. Pool Party
71. Teekay
72. Another Game of Men
73. Agbelebu
74. Dirty Diamond
75. Nneka My Queen
76. Wrong Number
77. Family Apart
78. Full Circle
79. Steal the bride
80. Wrong Choice
81. Never Again
82. The Sphepherd

83. Red Card

84. Prophet Chicha

85. The Pastor and the Harlot

86. Agony of the Anointed

87. Save My Love

88. My Father's Love

89. Divine Princes

90. Beyond Love

91. OJUKOJU

92. Gunshot

93. Critical Truth

94. The Models

95. Player no 1B

96. Dead Man's Tale

97. The Kingdom

98. Ere

99. Shield of Faith

- 100. Last Vote
- 101. Battle of Honour
- 102. Royal Fight
- 103. Caro The Shoe Maker
- 104. Lagos Housewives

Appendix 13: FOCUS GROUPS DISTRIBUTION:

SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

FOCUS GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC LOCATION	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	Dominant Kinship	Education Level	Social Stratification	Age	
NKHATABAY	Rural	5	0	5	Patrilineality	High/Low	Middle/ Low Class	30-55	
MZIMBA BOMA	Semi-Urban	10	7	3	Patrilineality	Fair	Middle Class	19-65	
MABULABO	Rural	9	4	5	Patrilineality	Low	Lower Class	26-58	
KANENGO	Urban	5	1	4	NA	High	Middle Class	22-41	
LILONGWE	Urban	9	7	2	NA	High	Middle Class	20-24	
NTCHEU	Semi-Urban	4	2	2	Matrilineality	High/Fair	Middle Class	18-49	
MANGOCHI	Semi-Urban	7	5	2	Matrilineality	High/Fair	Middle Class	20-54	
LUNZU	Urban	13	6	7	NA	Fair	Lower Class	20-65	
CHIKWAWA	Rural	21	16	5	Patrilineality	Low	Lower Class	18-55	

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Focus Groups' Participants

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|---|------------------------|
| • Chikwawa Focus Group: | 21 | = | 16 females and 5 males |
| • Kanengo Focus Group : | 5 | = | 1 female and 4 males |
| • Lilongwe Focus Group: | 9 | = | 7 females and 2 males |
| • Lunzu Focus Group : | 13 | = | 6 females and 7 males |
| • Mabulabo Focus Group: | 9 | = | 4 males and 5 females |
| • Mangochi Focus Group: | 7 | = | 5 females and 2 males |
| • Mzimba Focus Group: | 10 | = | 7 females and 3 males |

- Nkhatabay-Bay Focus Group: 5 = 0 female and 5 males
- Ntchewu Focus Group: 4 = 2 females and 2 males

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